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LORD KILGOBBIN

She suffered her hand to remain.

LORD KILGOBBIN

BY

CHARLES LEVER

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TO THE MEMORY OF ONE

WHOSE COMPANIONSHIP MADE THE HAPPINESS OF A LONG LIFE,

AND WHOSE LOSS HAS LEFT ME HELPLESS,

I DEDICATE THIS WORK,

WRITTEN IN BREAKING HEALTH AND BROKEN SPIRITS

THE TASK, THAT ONCE WAS MY JOY AND MY PRIDE,

I HAVE LIVED TO FIND ASSOCIATED WITH MY SORROW:

IT IS NOT, THEN, WITHOUT A CAUSE I SAY,

I HOPE THIS EFFORT MAY BE MY LAST.

CHARLES LEVER.

TRIESTE, *January* 20, 1872.

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LORD KILGOBBIN

CHAPTER I

KILGOBBIN CASTLE

Some one has said that almost all that Ireland possesses of picturesque beauty is to be found on, or in the immediate neighbourhood of, the seaboard; and if we except some brief patches of river scenery on the Nore and the Blackwater, and a part of Lough Erne, the assertion is not devoid of truth. The dreary expanse called the Bog of Allen, which occupies a tableland in the centre of the island, stretches away for miles—flat, sad-coloured, and monotonous, fissured in every direction by channels of dark-tinted water, in which the very fish take the same sad colour. This tract is almost without trace of habitation, save where, at distant intervals, utter destitution has raised a mud-hovel, undistinguishable from the hillocks of turf around it.

Fringing this broad waste, little patches of cultivation are to be seen: small potato-gardens, as they are called, or a few roods of oats, green even in the late autumn; but, strangely enough, with nothing to show where the humble tiller of the soil is living, nor, often, any visible road to these isolated spots of culture. Gradually, however—but very gradually—the prospect brightens. Fields with inclosures, and a cabin or two, are to be met with; a solitary tree, generally an ash, will be seen; some rude instrument of husbandry, or an ass-cart, will show that we are emerging from the region of complete destitution and approaching a land of at least struggling civilisation. At last, and by a transition that is not always easy to mark, the scene glides into those rich pasture-lands and well-tilled farms that form the wealth of the midland counties. Gentlemen's seats and waving plantations succeed, and we are in a country of comfort and abundance.

On this border-land between fertility and destitution, and on a tract which had probably once been part of the Bog itself, there

stood—there stands still—a short, square tower, battlemented at top, and surmounted with a pointed roof, which seems to grow out of a cluster of farm-buildings, so surrounded is its base by roofs of thatch and slates. Incongruous, vulgar, and ugly in every way, the old keep appears to look down on them—time-worn and battered as it is—as might a reduced gentleman regard the unworthy associates with which an altered fortune had linked him. This is all that remains of Kilgobbin Castle.

In the guidebooks we read that it was once a place of strength and importance, and that Hugh de Lacy—the same bold knight 'who had won all Ireland for the English from the Shannon to the sea'—had taken this castle from a native chieftain called Neal O'Caharney, whose family he had slain, all save one; and then it adds: 'Sir Hugh came one day, with three Englishmen, that he might show them the castle, when there came to him a youth of the men of Meath—a certain Gilla Naher O'Mahey, foster-brother of O'Caharney himself—with his battle-axe concealed beneath his cloak, and while De Lacy was reading the petition he gave him, he dealt him such a blow that his head flew off many yards away, both head and body being afterwards buried in the ditch of the castle.'

The annals of Kilronan further relate that the O'Caharneys became adherents of the English—dropping their Irish designation, and calling themselves Kearney; and in this way were restored to a part of the lands and the castle of Kilgobbin—'by favour of which act of grace,' says the chronicle, 'they were bound to raise a becoming monument over the brave knight, Hugh de Lacy, whom their kinsman had so treacherously slain; but they did no more of this than one large stone of granite, and no inscription thereon: thus showing that at all times, and with all men, the O'Caharneys were false knaves and untrue to their word.'

In later times, again, the Kearneys returned to the old faith of their fathers and followed the fortunes of King James; one of them, Michael O'Kearney, having acted as aide-de-camp at the 'Boyne,' and conducted the king to Kilgobbin, where he passed the night after the defeat, and, as the tradition records, held a court the next morning, at which he thanked the owner of the castle for his hospitality, and created him on the spot a viscount by the style and title of Lord Kilgobbin.

It is needless to say that the newly-created noble saw good reason to keep his elevation to himself. They were somewhat critical times just then for the adherents of the lost cause, and the followers of King William were keen at scenting out any

disloyalty that might be turned to good account by a confiscation. The Kearneys, however, were prudent. They entertained a Dutch officer, Van Straaten, on King William's staff, and gave such valuable information besides as to the condition of the country, that no suspicions of disloyalty attached to them.

To these succeeded more peaceful times, during which the Kearneys were more engaged in endeavouring to reconstruct the fallen condition of their fortunes than in political intrigue. Indeed, a very small portion of the original estate now remained to them, and of what once had produced above four thousand a year, there was left a property barely worth eight hundred.

The present owner, with whose fortunes we are more immediately concerned, was a widower. Mathew Kearney's family consisted of a son and a daughter: the former about two-and-twenty, the latter four years younger, though to all appearance there did not seem a year between them.

Mathew Kearney himself was a man of about fifty-four or fifty-six; hale, handsome, and powerful; his snow-white hair and bright complexion, with his full grey eyes and regular teeth, giving him an air of genial cordiality at first sight which was fully confirmed by further acquaintance. So long as the world went well with him, Mathew seemed to enjoy life thoroughly, and even its rubs he bore with an easy jocularity that showed what a stout heart he could oppose to Fortune. A long minority had provided him with a considerable sum on his coming of age, but he spent it freely, and when it was exhausted, continued to live on at the same rate as before, till at last, as creditors grew pressing, and mortgages threatened foreclosure, he saw himself reduced to something less than one-fifth of his former outlay; and though he seemed to address himself to the task with a bold spirit and a resolute mind, the old habits were too deeply rooted to be eradicated, and the pleasant companionship of his equals, his life at the club in Dublin, his joyous conviviality, no longer possible, he suffered himself to descend to an inferior rank, and sought his associates amongst humbler men, whose flattering reception of him soon reconciled him to his fallen condition. His companions were now the small farmers of the neighbourhood and the shopkeepers in the adjoining town of Moate, to whose habits and modes of thought and expression he gradually conformed, till it became positively irksome to himself to keep the company of his equals. Whether, however, it was that age had breached the stronghold of his good spirits, or that conscience rebuked him for having derogated from his station, certain it is that all his buoyancy failed him when away from society, and that in the

quietness of his home he was depressed and dispirited to a degree; and to that genial temper, which once he could count on against every reverse that befell him, there now succeeded an irritable, peevish spirit, that led him to attribute every annoyance he met with to some fault or shortcoming of others.

By his neighbours in the town and by his tenantry he was always addressed as 'My lord,' and treated with all the deference that pertained to such difference of station. By the gentry, however, when at rare occasions he met them, he was known as Mr. Kearney; and in the village post-office, the letters with the name Mathew Kearney, Esq., were perpetual reminders of what rank was accorded him by that wider section of the world that lived beyond the shadow of Kilgobbin Castle.

Perhaps the impossible task of serving two masters is never more palpably displayed than when the attempt attaches to a divided identity—when a man tries to be himself in two distinct parts in life, without the slightest misgiving of hypocrisy while doing so. Mathew Kearney not only did not assume any pretension to nobility amongst his equals, but he would have felt that any reference to his title from one of them would have been an impertinence, and an impertinence to be resented; while, at the same time, had a shopkeeper of Moate, or one of the tenants, addressed him as other than 'My lord,' he would not have deigned him a notice.

Strangely enough, this divided allegiance did not merely prevail with the outer world, it actually penetrated within his walls. By his son, Richard Kearney, he was always called 'My lord'; while Kate as persistently addressed and spoke of him as papa. Nor was this difference without signification as to their separate natures and tempers.

Had Mathew Kearney contrived to divide the two parts of his nature, and bequeathed all his pride, his vanity, and his pretensions to his son, while he gave his light-heartedness, his buoyancy, and kindliness to his daughter, the partition could not have been more perfect. Richard Kearney was full of an insolent pride of birth. Contrasting the position of his father with that held by his grandfather, he resented the downfall as the act of a dominant faction, eager to outrage the old race and the old religion of Ireland. Kate took a very different view of their condition. She clung, indeed, to the notion of their good blood; but as a thing that might assuage many of the pangs of adverse fortune, not increase or embitter them; and 'if we are ever to emerge,' thought she, 'from this poor state, we shall meet our class without any of the shame of a mushroom origin. It will be a restora-

tion, and not a new elevation.' She was a fine, handsome, fearless girl, whom many said ought to have been a boy; but this was rather intended as a covert slight on the narrower nature and peevish temperament of her brother—another way, indeed, of saying that they should have exchanged conditions.

The listless indolence of her father's life, and the almost complete absence from home of her brother, who was pursuing his studies at the Dublin University, had given over to her charge not only the household, but no small share of the management of the estate—all, in fact, that an old land-steward, a certain Peter Gill, would permit her to exercise; for Peter was a very absolute and despotic Grand-Vizier, and if it had not been that he could neither read nor write, it would have been utterly impossible to have wrested from him a particle of power over the property. This happy defect in his education—happy so far as Kate's rule was concerned—gave her the one claim she could prefer to any superiority over him, and his obstinacy could never be effectually overcome, except by confronting him with a written document or a column of figures. Before these, indeed, he would stand crestfallen and abashed. Some strange terror seemed to possess him as to the peril of opposing himself to such inscrutable testimony —a fear, be it said, he never felt in contesting an oral witness.

Peter had one resource, however, and I am not sure that a similar stronghold has not secured the power of greater men and in higher functions. Peter's sway was of so varied and complicated a kind; the duties he discharged were so various, manifold, and conflicting; the measures he took with the people, whose destinies were committed to him, were so thoroughly devised, by reference to the peculiar condition of each man—what he could do, or bear, or submit to—and not by any sense of justice; that a sort of government grew up over the property full of hitches, contingencies, and compensations, of which none but the inventor of the machinery could possibly pretend to the direction. The estate being, to use his own words, 'so like the old coach-harness, so full of knots, splices, and entanglements, there was not another man in Ireland could make it work, and if another were to try it, it would all come to pieces in his hands.'

Kate was shrewd enough to see this; and in the same way that she had admiringly watched Peter as he knotted a trace here and supplemented a strap there, strengthening a weak point, and providing for casualties even the least likely, she saw him dealing with the tenantry on the property; and in the same spirit that he made allowance for sickness here and misfortune there, he would be as prompt to screw up a lagging tenant to the last

penny, and secure the landlord in the share of any season of prosperity.

Had the Government Commissioner, sent to report on the state of land-tenure in Ireland, confined himself to a visit to the estate of Lord Kilgobbin—for so we like to call him—it is just possible that the Cabinet would have found the task of legislation even more difficult than they have already admitted it to be.

First of all, not a tenant on the estate had any certain knowledge of how much land he held. There had been no survey of the property for years. 'It will be made up to you,' was Gill's phrase about everything. 'What matters if you have an acre more or an acre less?' Neither had any one a lease, nor, indeed, a writing of any kind. Gill settled that on the 25th March and 25th September a certain sum was to be forthcoming, and that was all. When 'the lord' wanted them, they were always to give him a hand, which often meant with their carts and horses, especially in harvest-time. Not that they were a hard-worked or hard-working population: they took life very easy, seeing that by no possible exertion could they materially better themselves; and even when they hunted a neighbour's cow out of their wheat, they would execute the eviction with a lazy indolence and sluggishness that took away from the act all semblance of ungenerousness.

They were very poor, their hovels were wretched, their clothes ragged, and their food scanty; but, with all that, they were not discontented, and very far from unhappy. There was no prosperity at hand to contrast with their poverty. The world was, on the whole, pretty much as they always remembered it. They would have liked to be 'better off' if they knew how, but they did not know if there were a 'better off,' much less how to come at it; and if there were, Peter Gill certainly did not tell them of it.

If a stray visitor to fair or market brought back the news that there was an agitation abroad for a new settlement of the land, that popular orators were proclaiming the poor man's rights and denouncing the cruelties of the landlord, if they heard that men were talking of repealing the laws which secured property to the owner, and only admitted him to a sort of partnership with the tiller of the soil, old Gill speedily assured them that these were changes only to be adopted in Ulster, where the tenants were rack-rented and treated like slaves. 'Which of you here,' would he say, 'can come forward and say he was ever evicted?' Now as the term was one of which none had the very vaguest conception—it might, for aught they knew, have been an operation in

surgery—the appeal was an overwhelming success. 'Sorra doubt of it, but ould Peter's right, and there's worse places to live in, and worse landlords to live under, than the lord.' Not but it taxed Gill's skill and cleverness to maintain this quarantine against the outer world; and he often felt like Prince Metternich in a like strait—that it would only be a question of time, and, in the long-run, the newspaper fellows must win.

From what has been said, therefore, it may be imagined that Kilgobbin was not a model estate, nor Peter Gill exactly the sort of witness from which a select committee would have extracted any valuable suggestions for the construction of a land-code.

Anything short of Kate Kearney's fine temper and genial disposition would have broken down by daily dealing with this cross-grained, wrong-headed, and obstinate old fellow, whose ideas of management all centred in craft and subtlety—outwitting this man, forestalling that—doing everything by halves, so that no boon came unassociated with some contingency or other by which he secured to himself unlimited power and uncontrolled tyranny.

As Gill was in perfect possession of her father's confidence, to oppose him in anything was a task of no mean difficulty; and the mere thought that the old fellow should feel offended and throw up his charge—a threat he had more than once half hinted—was a terror Kilgobbin could not have faced. Nor was this her only care. There was Dick continually dunning her for remittances, and importuning her for means to supply his extravagances. 'I suspected how it would be,' wrote he once, 'with a lady paymaster. And when my father told me I was to look to you for my allowance, I accepted the information as a heavy percentage taken off my beggarly income. What could you—what could any young girl—know of the requirements of a man going out into the best society of a capital? To derive any benefit from associating with these people, I must at least seem to live like them. I am received as the son of a man of condition and property, and you want to bound my habits by those of my chum, Joe Atlee, whose father is starving somewhere on the pay of a Presbyterian minister. Even Joe himself laughs at the notion of gauging my expenses by his.

'If this is to go on—I mean if you intend to persist in this plan—be frank enough to say so at once, and I will either take pupils, or seek a clerkship, or go off to Australia; and I care precious little which of the three.

'I know what a proud thing it is for whoever manages the revenue to come forward and show a surplus. Chancellors of the Exchequer make great reputations in that fashion; but there

are certain economies that lie close to revolutions; now don't risk this, nor don't be above taking a hint from one some years older than you, though he neither rules his father's house nor metes out his pocket-money.'

Such, and such like, were the epistles she received from time to time, and though frequency blunted something of their sting, and their injustice gave her a support against their sarcasm, she read and thought over them in a spirit of bitter mortification. Of course she showed none of these letters to her father. He, indeed, only asked if Dick were well, or if he were soon going up for that scholarship or fellowship—he did not know which, nor was he to blame—'which, after all, it was hard on a Kearney to stoop to accept, only that times were changed with us! and we weren't what we used to be'—a reflection so overwhelming that he generally felt unable to dwell on it.

CHAPTER II

THE PRINCE KOSTALERGI

Mathew Kearney had once a sister whom he dearly loved, and whose sad fate lay very heavily on his heart, for he was not without self-accusings on the score of it. Matilda Kearney had been a belle of the Irish Court and a toast at the club when Mathew was a young fellow in town; and he had been very proud of her beauty, and tasted a full share of those attentions which often fall to the lot of brothers of handsome girls.

Then Matty was an heiress, that is, she had twelve thousand pounds in her own right; and Ireland was not such a California as to make a very pretty girl with twelve thousand pounds an everyday chance. She had numerous offers of marriage, and with the usual luck in such cases, there were commonplace unattractive men with good means, and there were clever and agreeable fellows without a sixpence, all alike ineligible. Matty had that infusion of romance in her nature that few, if any, Irish girls are free from, and which made her desire that the man of her choice should be something out of the common. She would have liked a soldier who had won distinction in the field. The idea of military fame was very dear to her Irish heart, and she fancied with what pride she would hang upon the arm of one whose gay trappings and gold embroidery emblematised the career he followed. If not a soldier, she would have liked a great orator, some leader in debate that men would rush down to hear,

and whose glowing words would be gathered up and repeated as though inspirations; after that a poet, and perhaps—not a painter—a sculptor, she thought, might do.

With such aspirations as these, it is not surprising that she rejected the offers of those comfortable fellows in Meath, or Louth, whose military glories were militia drills, and whose eloquence was confined to the bench of magistrates.

At three-and-twenty she was in the full blaze of her beauty; at three-and-thirty she was still unmarried, her looks on the wane, but her romance stronger than ever, not untinged perhaps with a little bitterness towards that sex which had not afforded one man of merit enough to woo and win her. Partly out of pique with a land so barren of all that could minister to imagination, partly in anger with her brother who had been urging her to a match she disliked, she went abroad to travel, wandered about for a year or two, and at last found herself one winter at Naples.

There was at that time, as secretary to the Greek legation, a young fellow whom repute called the handsomest man in Europe; he was a certain Spiridion Kostalergi, whose title was Prince of Delos, though whether there was such a principality, or that he was its representative, society was not fully agreed upon. At all events, Miss Kearney met him at a Court ball, when he wore his national costume, looking, it must be owned, so splendidly handsome that all thought of his princely rank was forgotten in presence of a face and figure that recalled the highest triumphs of ancient art. It was Antinous come to life in an embroidered cap and a gold-worked jacket, and it was Antinous with a voice like Mario, and who waltzed to perfection. This splendid creature, a modern Alcibiades in gifts of mind and graces, soon heard, amongst his other triumphs, how a rich and handsome Irish girl had fallen in love with him at first sight. He had himself been struck by her good looks and her stylish air, and learning that there could be no doubt about her fortune, he lost no time in making his advances. Before the end of the first week of their acquaintance he proposed. She referred him to her brother before she could consent; and though, when Kostalergi inquired amongst her English friends, none had ever heard of a Lord Kilgobbin, the fact of his being Irish explained their ignorance, not to say that Kearney's reply, being a positive refusal of consent, so fully satisfied the Greek that it was 'a good thing,' he pressed his suit with a most passionate ardour: threatened to kill himself if she persisted in rejecting him, and so worked upon her heart by his devotion, or on her pride by the

thought of his position, that she yielded, and within three weeks from the day they first met, she became the Princess of Delos.

When a Greek, holding any public employ, marries money, his Government is usually prudent enough to promote him. It is a recognition of the merit that others have discovered, and a wise administration marches with the inventions of the age it lives in. Kostalergi's chief was consequently recalled, suffered to fall back upon his previous obscurity—he had been a commission-agent for a house in the Greek trade—and the Prince of Delos gazetted as Minister Plenipotentiary of Greece, with the first class of St. Salvador, in recognition of his services to the state; no one being indiscreet enough to add that the aforesaid services were comprised in marrying an Irishwoman with a dowry of—to quote the *Athenian Hemera*—'three hundred and fifty thousand drachmas.'

For a while—it was a very brief while—the romantic mind of the Irish girl was raised to a sort of transport of enjoyment. Here was everything—more than everything—her most glowing imagination had ever conceived. Love, ambition, station all gratified, though, to be sure, she had quarrelled with her brother, who had returned her last letters unopened. Mathew, she thought, was too good-hearted to bear a long grudge: he would see her happiness, he would hear what a devoted and good husband her dear Spiridion had proved himself, and he would forgive her at last.

Though, as was well known, the Greek envoy received but a very moderate salary from his Government, and even that not paid with a strict punctuality, the legation was maintained with a splendour that rivalled, if it did not surpass, those of France, England, or Russia. The Prince of Delos led the fashion in equipage, as did the Princess in toilet; their dinners, their balls, their fêtes attracted the curiosity of even the highest to witness them; and to such a degree of notoriety had the Greek hospitality attained, that Naples at last admitted that without the Palazzo Kostalergi there would be nothing to attract strangers to the capital.

Play, so invariably excluded from the habits of an embassy, was carried on at this legation to such an excess that the clubs were completely deserted, and all the young men of gambling tastes flocked here each night, sure to find lansquenet or faro, and for stakes which no public table could possibly supply. It was not alone that this life of a gambler estranged Kostalergi from his wife, but that the scandal of his infidelities had reached her also, just at the time when some vague glimmering suspicions of

his utter worthlessness was breaking on her mind. The birth of a little girl did not seem in the slightest degree to renew the ties between them; on the contrary, the embarrassment of a baby, and the cost it must entail, were the only considerations he would entertain, and it was a constant question of his—uttered, too, with a tone of sarcasm that cut her to the heart: 'Would not her brother—the Lord Irlandais—like to have that baby? Would she not write and ask him?' Unpleasant stories had long been rife about the play at the Greek legation, when a young Russian secretary, of high family and influence, lost an immense sum under circumstances which determined him to refuse payment. Kostalergi, who had been the chief winner, refused everything like inquiry or examination; in fact, he made investigation impossible, for the cards, which the Russian had declared to be marked, the Greek gathered up slowly from the table and threw into the fire, pressing his foot upon them in the flames, and then calmly returning to where the other stood, he struck him across the face, with his open hand, saying, as he did it: 'Here is another debt to repudiate, and before the same witnesses also!'

The outrage did not admit of delay. The arrangements were made in an instant, and within half an hour—merely time enough to send for a surgeon—they met at the end of the garden of the legation. The Russian fired first, and though a consummate pistol-shot, agitation at the insult so unnerved him that he missed: his ball cut the knot of Kostalergi's cravat. The Greek took a calm and deliberate aim, and sent his bullet through the other's forehead. He fell without a word, stone dead.

Though the duel had been a fair one, and the *procès-verbal* drawn up and agreed on both sides showed that all had been done loyally, the friends of the young Russian had influence to make the Greek Government not only recall the envoy, but abolish the mission itself.

For some years the Kostalergis lived in retirement at Palermo, not knowing nor known to any one. Their means were now so reduced that they had barely sufficient for daily life, and though the Greek prince—as he was called—constantly appeared on the public promenade well dressed, and in all the pride of his handsome figure, it was currently said that his wife was literally dying of want.

It was only after long and agonising suffering that she ventured to write to her brother, and appeal to him for advice and assistance. But at last she did so, and a correspondence grew up which, in a measure, restored the affection between them. When Kostalergi discovered the source from which his wretched

wife now drew her consolation and her courage, he forbade her to write more, and himself addressed a letter to Kearney so insulting and offensive—charging him even with causing the discord of his home, and showing the letter to his wife before sending it—that the poor woman, long failing in health and broken down, sank soon after, and died so destitute, that the very funeral was paid for by a subscription amongst her countrymen. Kostalergi had left her some days before her death, carrying the girl along with him, nor was his whereabouts learned for a considerable time.

When next he emerged into the world it was at Rome, where he gave lessons in music and modern languages, in many of which he was a proficient. His splendid appearance, his captivating address, his thorough familiarity with the modes of society, gave him the entrée to many houses where his talents amply requited the hospitality he received. He possessed, amongst his other gifts, an immense amount of plausibility, and people found it, besides, very difficult to believe ill of that well-bred, somewhat retiring man, who, in circumstances of the very narrowest fortunes, not only looked and dressed like a gentleman, but actually brought up a daughter with a degree of care and an amount of regard to her education that made him appear a model parent.

Nina Kostalergi was then about seventeen, though she looked at least three years older. She was a tall, slight, pale girl, with perfectly regular features—so classic in the mould, and so devoid of any expression, that she recalled the face one sees on a cameo. Her hair was of wondrous beauty—that rich gold colour which has *reflets* through it, as the light falls full or faint, and of an abundance that taxed her ingenuity to dress it. They gave her the sobriquet of the Titian Girl at Rome whenever she appeared abroad.

In the only letter Kearney had received from his brother-in-law after his sister's death was an insolent demand for a sum of money, which he alleged that Kearney was unjustly withholding, and which he now threatened to enforce by law. 'I am well aware,' wrote he, 'what measure of honour or honesty I am to expect from a man whose very name and designation are a deceit. But probably prudence will suggest how much better it would be on this occasion to simulate rectitude than risk the shame of an open exposure.'

To this gross insult Kearney never deigned any reply; and now more than two years passed without any tidings of his disreputable relative, when there came one morning a letter with the Roman postmark, and addressed, '*À Monsieur le Vicomte de*

Kilgobbin, à son Château de Kilgobbin, en Irlande.' To the honour of the officials in the Irish post-office, it was forwarded to Kilgobbin with the words, 'Try Matthew Kearney, Esq.,' in the corner.

A glance at the writing showed it was not in Kostalergi's hand, and, after a moment or two of hesitation, Kearney opened it. He turned at once for the writer's name, and read the words, 'Nina Kostalergi'—his sister's child! 'Poor Matty,' was all he could say for some minutes. He remembered the letter in which she told him of her little girl's birth, and implored his forgiveness for herself and his love for her baby. 'I want both, my dear brother,' wrote she; 'for though the bonds we make for ourselves by our passions——' And the rest of the sentence was erased—she evidently thinking she had delineated all that could give a clue to a despondent reflection.

The present letter was written in English, but in that quaint, peculiar hand Italians often write. It began by asking forgiveness for daring to write to him, and recalling the details of the relationship between them, as though he could not have remembered it. 'I am, then, in my right,' wrote she, 'when I address you as my dear, dear uncle, of whom I have heard so much, and whose name was in my prayers ere I knew why I knelt to pray.'

Then followed a piteous appeal—it was actually a cry for protection. Her father, she said, had determined to devote her to the stage, and already had taken steps to sell her—she said she used the word advisedly—for so many years to the impresario of the 'Fenice' at Venice, her voice and musical skill being such as to give hope of her becoming a prima donna. She had, she said, frequently sung at private parties at Rome, but only knew within the last few days that she had been, not a guest, but a paid performer. Overwhelmed with the shame and indignity of this false position, she implored her mother's brother to compassionate her. 'If I could not become a governess, I could be your servant, dearest uncle,' she wrote. 'I only ask a roof to shelter me, and a refuge. May I go to you? I would beg my way on foot if I only knew that at the last your heart and your door would be open to me, and as I fell at your feet, knew that I was saved.'

Until a few days ago, she said, she had by her some little trinkets her mother had left her, and on which she counted as a means of escape, but her father had discovered them and taken them from her.

'If you answer this—and oh! let me not doubt you will—write to me to the care of the Signori Cayani and Battistella,

bankers, Rome. Do not delay, but remember that I am friendless, and but for this chance hopeless.—Your niece,

'Nina Kostalergi.'

While Kearney gave this letter to his daughter to read, he walked up and down the room with his head bent and his hands deep in his pockets.

'I think I know the answer you'll send to this, papa,' said the girl, looking up at him with a glow of pride and affection in her face. 'I do not need that you should say it.'

'It will take fifty—no, not fifty, but five-and-thirty pounds to bring her over here, and how is she to come all alone?'

Kate made no reply; she knew the danger sometimes of interrupting his own solution of a difficulty.

'She's a big girl, I suppose, by this—fourteen or fifteen?'

'Over nineteen, papa.'

'So she is, I was forgetting. That scoundrel, her father, might come after her; he'd have the right if he wished to enforce it, and what a scandal he'd bring upon us all!'

'But would he care to do it? Is he not more likely to be glad to be disembarrassed of her charge?'

'Not if he was going to sell her—not if he could convert her into money.'

'He has never been in England; he may not know how far the law would give him any power over her.'

'Don't trust that, Kate; a blackguard always can find out how much is in his favour everywhere. If he doesn't know it now, he'd know it the day after he landed.' He paused an instant, and then said: 'There will be the devil to pay with old Peter Gill, for he'll want all the cash I can scrape together for Loughrea fair. He counts on having eighty sheep down there at the long crofts, and a cow or two besides. That's money's worth, girl!'

Another silence followed, after which he said, 'And I think worse of the Greek scoundrel than all the cost.'

'Somehow, I have no fear that he'll come here.'

'You'll have to talk over Peter, Kitty'—he always said Kitty when he meant to coax her. 'He'll mind you, and at all events, you don't care about his grumbling. Tell him it's a sudden call on me for railroad shares, or'—and here he winked knowingly—'say, it's going to Rome the money is, and for the Pope!'

'That's an excellent thought, papa,' said she, laughing; 'I'll certainly tell him the money is going to Rome, and you'll write soon—you see with what anxiety she expects your answer.'

'I'll write to-night when the house is quiet, and there's no racket nor disturbance about me.' Now though Kearney said this with a perfect conviction of its truth and reasonableness, it would have been very difficult for any one to say in what that racket he spoke of consisted, or wherein the quietude of even midnight was greater than that which prevailed there at noonday. Never, perhaps, were lives more completely still or monotonous than theirs. People who derive no interests from the outer world, who know nothing of what goes on in life, gradually subside into a condition in which reflection takes the place of conversation, and lose all zest and all necessity for that small talk which serves, like the changes of a game, to while away time, and by the aid of which, if we do no more, we often delude the cares and worries of existence.

A kind good-morning when they met, and a few words during the day—some mention of this or that event of the farm or the labourers, and rare enough too—some little incident that happened amongst the tenants, made all the materials of their intercourse, and filled up lives which either would very freely have owned were far from unhappy.

Dick, indeed, when he came home and was weather-bound for a day, did lament his sad destiny, and mutter half-intelligible nonsense of what he would not rather do than descend to such a melancholy existence; but in all his complainings he never made Kate discontented with her lot, or desire anything beyond it.

'It's all very well,' he would say, 'till you know something better.'

'But I want no better.'

'Do you mean you'd like to go through life in this fashion?'

'I can't pretend to say what I may feel as I grow older; but if I could be sure to be as I am now, I could ask nothing better.'

'I must say, it's a very inglorious life,' said he, with a sneer.

'So it is, but how many, may I ask, are there who lead glorious lives? Is there any glory in dining out, in dancing, visiting, and picnicking? Where is the great glory of the billiard-table, or the croquet-lawn? No, no, my dear Dick, the only glory that falls to the share of such humble folks as we are, is to have something to do, and to do it.'

Such were the sort of passages which would now and then occur between them, little contests, be it said, in which she usually came off the conqueror.

If she were to have a wish gratified, it would have been a few more books—something besides those odd volumes of Scott's novels, *Zeluco* by Doctor Moore, and *Florence M'Carthy*, which

comprised her whole library, and which she read over and over unceasingly. She was now in her usual place—a deep window-seat—intently occupied with Amy Robsart's sorrows, when her father came to read what he had written in answer to Nina. If it was very brief it was very affectionate. It told her in a few words that she had no need to recall the ties of their relationship; that his heart never ceased to remind him of them; that his home was a very dull one, but that her cousin Kate would try and make it a happy one to her; entreated her to confer with the banker, to whom he remitted forty pounds, in what way she could make the journey, since he was too broken in health himself to go and fetch her. 'It is a bold step I am counselling you to take. It is no light thing to quit a father's home, and I have my misgivings how far I am a wise adviser in recommending it. There is, however, a present peril, and I must try, if I can, to save you from it. Perhaps, in my old-world notions, I attach to the thought of the stage ideas that you would only smile at; but none of our race, so far as I know, fell to that condition—nor must you while I have a roof to shelter you. If you would write and say about what time I might expect you, I will try to meet you on your landing in England at Dover. Kate sends you her warmest love, and longs to see you.'

This was the whole of it. But a brief line to the bankers said that any expense they judged needful to her safe convoy across Europe would be gratefully repaid by him.

'Is it all right, dear? Have I forgotten anything?' asked he, as Kate read it over.

'It 's everything, papa—everything. And I *do* long to see her.'

'I hope she 's like Matty—if she 's only like her poor mother, it will make my heart young again to look at her.'

CHAPTER III

THE CHUMS

In that old square of Trinity College, Dublin, one side of which fronts the Park, and in chambers on the ground-floor, an oak door bore the names of 'Kearney and Atlee.'

Kearney was the son of Lord Kilgobbin; Atlee, his chum, the son of a Presbyterian minister in the north of Ireland, had been four years in the university, but was still in his freshman period, not from any deficiency of scholarlike ability to push on, but that, as the poet of the *Seasons* lay in bed, because he 'had no motive

'What lark have you been on, Master Joe?'

for rising,' Joe Atlee felt that there need be no urgency about taking a degree which, when he had got, he should be sorely puzzled to know what to do with. He was a clever, ready-witted, but capricious fellow, fond of pleasure, and self-indulgent to a degree that ill suited his very smallest of fortunes, for his father was a poor man, with a large family, and had already embarrassed himself heavily by the cost of sending his eldest son to the university. Joe's changes of purpose—for he had in succession abandoned law for medicine, medicine for theology, and theology for civil engineering, and, finally, gave them all up—had so outraged his father that he declared he would not continue any allowance to him beyond the present year; to which Joe replied by the same post, sending back the twenty pounds enclosed him, and saying: 'The only amendment I would make to your motion is—as to the date—let it begin from to-day. I suppose I shall have to swim without corks some time. I may as well try now as later on.'

The first experience of his 'swimming without corks' was to lie in bed two days and smoke; the next was to rise at daybreak and set out on a long walk into the country, from which he returned late at night, wearied and exhausted, having eaten but once during the day.

Kearney, dressed for an evening party, resplendent with jewellery, essenced and curled, was about to issue forth when Atlee, dusty and wayworn, entered and threw himself into a chair.

'What lark have you been on, Master Joe?' he said. 'I have not seen you for three days, if not four!'

'No; I've begun to train,' said he gravely. 'I want to see how long a fellow could hold on to life on three pipes of Cavendish per diem. I take it that the absorbents won't be more cruel than a man's creditors, and will not issue a distraint where there are no assets, so that probably by the time I shall have brought myself down to, let us say, seven stone weight, I shall have reached the goal.'

This speech he delivered slowly and calmly, as though ennunciating a very grave proposition.

'What new nonsense is this? Don't you think health worth something?'

'Next to life, unquestionably; but one condition of health is to be alive, and I don't see how to manage that. Look here, Dick, I have just had a quarrel with my father; he is an excellent man and an impressive preacher, but he fails in the imaginative qualities. Nature has been a niggard to him in

inventiveness. He is the minister of a little parish called Aghadoe, in the North, where they give him two hundred and ten pounds per annum. There are eight in family, and he actually does not see his way to allow me one hundred and fifty out of it. That's the way they neglect arithmetic in our modern schools!'

'Has he reduced your allowance?'

'He has done more, he has extinguished it.'

'Have you provoked him to this?'

'I have provoked him to it.'

'But is it not possible to accommodate matters? It should not be very difficult, surely, to show him that once you are launched in life——'

'And when will that be, Dick?' broke in the other. 'I have been on the stocks these four years, and that launching process you talk of looks just as remote as ever. No, no; let us be fair; he has all the right on his side, all the wrong is on mine. Indeed, so far as conscience goes, I have always felt it so, but one's conscience, like one's boots, gets so pliant from wear, that it ceases to give pain. Still, on my honour, I never hip-hurraed to a toast that I did not feel: there goes broken boots to one of the boys, or, worse again, the cost of a cotton dress for one of the sisters. Whenever I took a sherry-cobbler I thought of suicide after it. Self-indulgence and self-reproach got linked in my nature so inseparably, it was hopeless to summon one without the other, till at last I grew to believe it was very heroic in me to deny myself nothing, seeing how sorry I should be for it afterwards. But come, old fellow, don't lose your evening; we'll have time enough to talk over these things—where are you going?'

'To the Clancys'.'

'To be sure; what a fellow I am to forget it was Letty's birthday, and I was to have brought her a bouquet! Dick, be a good fellow and tell her some lie or other—that I was sick in bed, or away to see an aunt or a grandmother, and that I had a splendid bouquet for her, but wouldn't let it reach her through other hands than my own, but to-morrow—to-morrow she shall have it.'

'You know well enough you don't mean anything of the sort.'

'On my honour, I'll keep my promise. I've an old silver watch yonder—I think it knows the way to the pawn-office by itself. There, now be off, for if I begin to think of all the fun you're going to, I shall just dress and join you.'

'No, I'd not do that,' said Dick gravely, 'nor shall I stay long myself. Don't go to bed, Joe, till I come back. Good-bye.'

'Say all good and sweet things to Letty for me. Tell her——' Kearney did not wait for his message, but hurried down the steps and drove off.

Joe sat down at the fire, filled his pipe, looked steadily at it, and then laid it on the mantel-piece. 'No, no, Master Joe. You must be thrifty now. You have smoked twice since—I can afford to say—since dinner-time, for you haven't dined. It is strange, now that the sense of hunger has passed off, what a sense of excitement I feel. Two hours back I could have been a cannibal. I believe I could have eaten the vice-provost—though I should have liked him strongly devilled—and now I feel stimulated. Hence it is, perhaps, that so little wine is enough to affect the heads of starving people—almost maddening them. Perhaps Dick suspected something of this, for he did not care that I should go along with him. Who knows but he may have thought the sight of a supper might have overcome me. If he knew but all. I 'm much more disposed to make love to Letty Clancy than to go in for galantine and champagne. By the way, I wonder if the physiologists are aware of that? It is, perhaps, what constitutes the ethereal condition of love. I 'll write an essay on that, or, better still, I 'll write a review of an imaginary French essay. Frenchmen are permitted to say so much more than we are, and I 'll be rebukeful on the score of his excesses. The bitter way in which a Frenchman always visits his various incapacities—whether it be to know something, or to do something, or to be something—on the species he belongs to; the way in which he suggests that, had he been consulted on the matter, humanity had been a much more perfect organisation, and able to sustain a great deal more of wickedness without disturbance, is great fun. I 'll certainly invent a Frenchman, and make him an author, and then demolish him. What if I make him die of hunger, having tasted nothing for eight days but the proof-sheets of his great work—the work I am then reviewing? For four days—but stay—if I starve him to death, I cannot tear his work to pieces. No; he shall be alive, living in splendour and honour, a frequenter of the Tuileries, a favoured guest at Compiègne.'

Without perceiving it, he had now taken his pipe, lighted it, and was smoking away. 'By the way, how those same Imperialists have played the game!—the two or three middle-aged men that Kinglake says, "put their heads together to plan for a livelihood." I wish they had taken me into the partnership. It 's the sort of thing I 'd have liked well; ay, and I could have done it, too! I wonder,' said he aloud—'I wonder if I were an emperor should I marry Letty Clancy? I suspect not. Letty

would have been flippant as an empress, and her cousins would have made atrocious princes of the Imperial family, though, for the matter of that—— Hullo! Here have I been smoking without knowing it! Can any one tell us whether the sins we do inadvertently count as sins, or do we square them off by our inadvertent good actions? I trust I shall not be called on to catalogue mine. There, my courage is out!' As he said this he emptied the ashes of his pipe, and gazed sorrowfully at the empty bowl.

'Now, if I were the son of some good house, with a high-sounding name, and well-to-do relations, I'd soon bring them to terms if they dared to cast me off. I'd sweep the crossing in front of their windows, or I'd commit a small theft, and call on my high connections for a character—but being who and what I am, I might do any or all of these, and shock nobody.

'Next to take stock of my effects. Let me see what my assets will bring when reduced to cash, for this time it shall be a sale.' And he turned to a table where paper and pens were lying, and proceeded to write. 'Personal, sworn under, let us say, ten thousand pounds. Literature first. To divers worn copies of *Virgil*, *Tacitus*, *Juvenal*, and *Ovid*, Cæsar's *Commentaries*, and *Catullus*; to ditto ditto of *Homer*, *Lucian*, *Aristophanes*, *Balzac*, *Anacreon*, Bacon's *Essays*, and Moore's *Melodies*; to Dwight's *Theology*—uncut copy, Heine's *Poems*—very much thumbed, *Saint Simon*—very ragged, two volumes of *Les Causes Célèbres*, Tone's *Memoirs*, and Beranger's *Songs*; to Cuvier's *Comparative Anatomy*, Shroeder on *Shakespeare*, Newman's *Apology*, Archbold's *Criminal Law* and *Songs of the Nation*; to Colenso, East's *Cases for the Crown*, Carte's *Ormonde*, and *Pickwick*. But why go on? Let us call it the small but well-selected library of a distressed gentleman, whose cultivated mind is reflected in the marginal notes with which these volumes abound. Will any gentleman say, "£10 for the lot"? Why the very criticisms are worth—I mean to a man of literary tastes—five times the amount. No offer at £10? Who is it that says "five"? I trust my ears have deceived me. You repeat the insulting proposal? Well, sir, on your own head be it! Mr. Atlee's library—or the Atlee's collection is better—was yesterday disposed of to a well-known collector of rare books, and, if we are rightly informed, for a mere fraction of its value. Never mind, sir, I bear you no ill-will! I was irritable, and to show you my honest animus in the matter, I beg to present you in addition with this, a handsomely-bound and gilt copy of a sermon by the Reverend Isaac Atlee, on the opening of the new meeting-house in Coleraine—a

discourse that cost my father some sleepless nights, though I have heard the effect on the congregation was dissimilar.

'The pictures are few. Cardinal Cullen, I believe, is Kearney's; at all events, he is the worse for being made a target for pistol firing, and the archiepiscopal nose has been sorely damaged. Two views of Killarney in the weather of the period—that means July, and raining in torrents—and consequently the scene, for aught discoverable, might be the Gaboon. Portrait of Joe Atlee, *ætatis* four years, with a villainous squint, and something that looks like a plug in the left jaw. A Skye terrier, painted, it is supposed, by himself; not to recite unframed prints of various celebrities of the ballet, in accustomed attitudes, with the Reverend Paul Bloxham blessing some children—though from the gesture and the expression of the juveniles it might seem cuffing them—on the inauguration of the Sunday school at Kilmurry Macmacmahon.

'Lot three, interesting to anatomical lecturers and others, especially those engaged in palæontology. The articulated skeleton of an Irish giant, representing a man who must have stood in his no-stockings eight feet four inches. This, I may add, will be warranted as authentic, in so far that I made him myself out of at least eighteen or twenty big specimens, with a few slight "divergencies" I may call them, such as putting in eight more dorsal vertebræ than the regulation, and that the right femur is two inches longer than the left. The inferior maxillary, too, was stolen from a "Pithacus Satyrus" in the Cork Museum by an old friend, since transported for Fenianism. These blemishes apart, he is an admirable giant, and fully as ornamental and useful as the species generally.

'As to my wardrobe, it is less costly than curious; an alpaca paletot of a neutral tint, which I have much affected of late, having indisposed me to other wear. For dinner and evening duty I usually wear Kearney's, though too tight across the chest, and short in the sleeves. These, with a silver watch which no pawnbroker—and I have tried eight—will ever advance more on than seven-and-six. I once got the figure up to nine shillings by supplementing an umbrella, which was Dick's, and which still remains, "unclaimed and unredeemed."

'Two o'clock, by all that is supperless! evidently Kearney is enjoying himself. Ah, youth, youth! I wish I could remember some of the spiteful things that are said of you—not but on the whole, I take it, you have the right end of the stick. Is it possible there is nothing to eat in this inhospitable mansion?' He arose and opened a sort of cupboard in the wall, scrutinising it closely with the candle. '"Give me but the superfluities of

life," says Gavarni, "and I'll not trouble you for its necessaries." What would he say, however, to a fellow famishing with hunger in presence of nothing but pickled mushrooms and Worcester sauce! Oh, here is a crust! "Bread is the staff of life." On my oath, I believe so; for this eats devilish like a walking-stick.

'Hullo! back already?' cried he, as Kearney flung wide the door and entered. 'I suppose you hurried away back to join me at supper.'

'Thanks; but I have supped already, and at a more tempting banquet than this I see before you.'

'Was it pleasant? was it jolly? Were the girls looking lovely? Was the champagne-cup well iced? Was everybody charming? Tell me all about it. Let me have second-hand pleasure, since I can't afford the new article.'

'It was pretty much like every other small ball here, where the garrison get all the prettiest girls for partners, and take the mammas down to supper after.'

'Cunning dogs, who secure flirtation above stairs and food below! And what is stirring in the world? What are the gaieties in prospect? Are any of my old flames about to get married?'

'I didn't know you had any.'

'Have I not! I believe half the parish of St. Peter's might proceed against me for breach of promise; and if the law allowed me as many wives as Brigham Young, I'd be still disappointing a large and interesting section of society in the suburbs.'

'They have made a seizure on the office of the *Pike*, carried off the press and the whole issue, and are in eager pursuit after Madden, the editor.'

'What for? What is it all about?'

'A new ballad he has published; but which, for the matter of that, they were singing at every corner as I came along.'

'Was it good? Did you buy a copy?'

'Buy a copy? I should think not.'

'Couldn't your patriotism stand the test of a penny?'

'It might if I wanted the production, which I certainly did not; besides, there is a run upon this, and they were selling it at sixpence.'

'Hurrah! There's hope for Ireland after all! Shall I sing it for you, old fellow? Not that you deserve it. English corruption has damped the little Irish ardour that old rebellion once kindled in your heart; and if you could get rid of your brogue, you're ready to be loyal. You shall hear it, however,

all the same.' And taking up a very damaged-looking guitar, he struck a few bold chords, and began :—

'Is there anything more we can fight or can hate for?
The "drop" and the famine have made our ranks thin.
In the name of endurance, then, what do we wait for?
Will nobody give us the word to begin?

'Some brothers have left us in sadness and sorrow,
In despair of the cause they had sworn to win;
They owned they were sick of that cry of "to-morrow";
Not a man would believe that we meant to begin.

'We 've been ready for months—is there one can deny it?
Is there any one here thinks rebellion a sin?
We counted the cost—and we did not decry it,
And we asked for no more than the word to begin.

'At Vinegar Hill, when our fathers were fighters,
With numbers against them, they cared not a pin;
They needed no orders from newspaper writers,
To tell them the day it was time to begin.

'To sit here in sadness and silence to bear it,
Is harder to face than the battle's loud din;
'Tis the shame that will kill me—I vow it, I swear it!
Now or never 's the time, if we mean to begin.'

There was a wild rapture in the way he struck the last chords, that, if it did not evince ecstasy, seemed to counterfeit enthusiasm.

'Very poor doggerel, with all your bravura,' said Kearney sneeringly.

'What would you have? I only got three-and-six for it.'

'You! Is that thing yours?'

'Yes, sir; that thing is mine. And the Castle people think somewhat more gravely about it than you do.'

'At which you are pleased, doubtless?'

'Not pleased, but proud, Master Dick, let me tell you. It 's a very stimulating reflection to the man who dines on an onion, that he can spoil the digestion of another fellow who has been eating turtle.'

'But you may have to go to prison for this.'

'Not if you don't peach on me, for you are the only one who knows the authorship. You see, Dick, these things are done cautiously. They are dropped into a letter-box with an initial letter, and a clerk hands the payment to some of those itinerant hags that sing the melody, and who can be trusted with the secret as implicitly as the briber at a borough election.'

'I wish you had a better livelihood, Joe.'

'So do I, or that my present one paid better. The fact is, Dick, patriotism never was worth much as a career till one got to the top of the profession. But if you mean to sleep at all, old fellow, "it's time to begin,"' and he chanted out the last words in a clear and ringing tone, as he banged the door behind him.

CHAPTER IV

AT 'TRINITY'

It was while the two young men were seated at breakfast that the post arrived, bringing a number of country newspapers, for which, in one shape or other, Joe Atlee wrote something. Indeed, he was an 'own correspondent,' dating from London, or Paris, or occasionally from Rome, with an easy freshness and a local colour that vouched for authenticity. These journals were of a very political tint, from emerald green to the deepest orange; and, indeed, between two of them—the *Tipperary Pike* and the *Boyne Water*, hailing from Carrickfergus—there was a controversy of such violence and intemperance of language, that it was a curiosity to see the two papers on the same table: the fact being capable of explanation, that they were both written by Joe Atlee—a secret, however, that he had not confided even to his friend Kearney.

'Will that fellow that signs himself Terry O'Toole in the *Pike* stand this?' cried Kearney, reading aloud from the *Boyne Water*:—

'"We know the man who corresponds with you under the signature of Terry O'Toole, and it is but one of the aliases under which he has lived since he came out of the Richmond Bridewell, filcher, forger, and false witness. There is yet one thing he has never tried, which is to behave with a little courage. If he should, however, be able to persuade himself, by the aid of his accustomed stimulants, to accept the responsibility of what he has written, we bind ourselves to pay his expenses to any part of France or Belgium, where he will meet us, and we shall also bind ourselves to give him what his life little entitles him to, a Christian burial afterwards. No Surrender."'

'I am just reading the answer,' said Joe. 'It is very brief: here it is:—

'"If 'No Surrender'—who has been a newsvender in your establishment since you yourself rose from that employ to the

editor's chair—will call at this office any morning after distributing his eight copies of your daily issue, we promise to give him such a kicking as he has never experienced during his literary career. TERRY O'TOOLE"'

'And these are the amenities of journalism,' cried Kearney.

'For the matter of that, you might exclaim at the quack doctor of a fair, and ask, Is this the dignity of medicine?' said Joe. 'There's a head and a tail to every walk in life: even the law has a Chief-Justice at one end and a Jack Ketch at the other.'

'Well, I sincerely wish that those blackguards would first kick and then shoot each other.'

'They'll do nothing of the kind! It's just as likely that they wrote the whole correspondence at the same table and with the same jug of punch between them.'

'If so, I don't envy you your career or your comrades.'

'It's a lottery with big prizes in the wheel all the same! I could tell you the names of great swells, Master Dick, who have made very proud places for themselves in England by what you call "journalism." In France it is the one road to eminence. Cannot you imagine, besides, what capital fun it is to be able to talk to scores of people you were never introduced to? to tell them an infinity of things on public matters, or now and then about themselves; and in so many moods as you have tempers, to warn them, scold, compassionate, correct, console, or abuse them? to tell them not to be over-confident or bumptious, or purse-proud——'

'And who are *you*, may I ask, who presume to do all this?'

'That's as it may be. We are occasionally Guizot, Thiers, Prévot Paradol, Lytton, Disraeli, or Joe Atlee.'

'Modest, at all events.'

'And why not say what I feel—not what I have done, but what is in me to do? Can't you understand this: it would never occur to me that I could vault over a five-bar gate if I had been born a cripple; but the conscious possession of a little pliant muscularity might well tempt me to try it.'

'And get a cropper for your pains.'

'Be it so. Better the cropper than pass one's life looking over the top rail and envying the fellow that had cleared it; but what's this? here's a letter here: it got in amongst the newspapers. I say, Dick, do you stand this sort of thing?' said he, as he read the address.

'Stand what sort of thing?' asked the other, half angrily.

'Why, to be addressed in this fashion? The Honourable Richard Kearney, Trinity College, Dublin.'

'It is from my sister,' said Kearney, as he took the letter impatiently from his hand; 'and I can only tell you, if she had addressed me otherwise, I'd not have opened her letter.'

'But come now, old fellow, don't lose temper about it. You have a right to this designation, or you have not——'

'I'll spare all your eloquence by simply saying, that I do not look on you as a Committee of Privilege, and I'm not going to plead before you. Besides,' added he, 'it's only a few minutes ago you asked me to credit you for something you have not shown yourself to be, but that you intended and felt that the world should see you were, one of these days.'

'So, then, you really mean to bring your claim before the Lords?'

Kearney, if he heard, did not heed this question, but went on to read his letter. 'Here's a surprise!' cried he. 'I was telling you, the other day, about a certain cousin of mine we were expecting from Italy.'

'The daughter of that swindler, the mock prince?'

'The man's character I'll not stand up for, but his rank and title are alike indisputable,' said Kearney haughtily.

'With all my heart. We have soared into a high atmosphere all this day, and I hope my respiration will get used to it in time. Read away!'

It was not till after a considerable interval that Kearney had recovered composure enough to read, and when he did so it was with a brow furrowed with irritation:—

'Kilgobbin.

'My dear Dick,—We had just sat down to tea last night, and papa was fidgeting about the length of time his letter to Italy had remained unacknowledged, when a sharp ring at the house-door startled us. We had been hearing a good deal of searches for arms lately in the neighbourhood, and we looked very blankly at each other for a moment. We neither of us said so, but I feel sure our thoughts were on the same track, and that we believed Captain Rock, or the head-centre, or whatever be his latest title, had honoured us with a call. Old Mathew seemed of the same mind too, for he appeared at the door with that venerable blunderbuss we have so often played with, and which, if it had any evil thoughts in its head, I must have been tried for a murder years ago, for I know it was loaded since I was a child, but that the lock has for the same space of time not been on

speaking terms with the barrel. While, then, thus confirmed in our suspicions of mischief by Mat's warlike aspect, we both rose from the table, the door opened, and a young girl rushed in, and fell—actually threw herself into papa's arms. It was Nina herself, who had come all the way from Rome alone, that is, without any one she knew, and made her way to us here, without any other guidance than her own good wits.

'I cannot tell you how delighted we are with her. She is the loveliest girl I ever saw, so gentle, so nicely mannered, so soft-voiced, and so winning—I feel myself like a peasant beside her. The least thing she says—her laugh, her slightest gesture, the way she moves about the room, with a sort of swinging grace, which I thought affected at first, but now I see is quite natural—is only another of her many fascinations.

'I fancied for a while that her features were almost too beautifully regular for expression, and that even when she smiled and showed her lovely teeth, her eyes got no increase of brightness; but, as I talked more with her, and learned to know her better, I saw that those eyes have meanings of softness and depths in them of wonderful power, and, stranger than all, an archness that shows she has plenty of humour.

'Her English is charming, but slightly foreign; and when she is at a loss for a word, there is just that much of difficulty in finding it which gives a heightened expression to her beautifully calm face, and makes it lovely. You may see how she has fascinated me, for I could go on raving about her for hours.

'She is very anxious to see you, and asks me over and over again, Shall you like her? I was almost candid enough to say "too well." I mean that you could not help falling in love with her, my dear Dick, and she is so much above us in style, in habit, and doubtless in ambition, that such would be only madness. When she saw your photo she smiled, and said, "Is he not superb?—I mean proud?" I owned you were, and then she added, "I hope he will like me." I am not perhaps discreet if I tell you she does not like the portrait of your chum, Atlee. She says "he is very good-looking, very clever, very witty, but isn't he false?" and this she says over and over again. I told her I believed not; that I had never seen him myself, but that I knew that you liked him greatly, and felt to him as a brother. She only shook her head, and said, "*Badate bene a quel che dico.* I mean," said she, "*I*'m right, but he's very nice for all that!" If I tell you this, Dick, it is just because I cannot get it out of my head, and I will keep saying over and over to myself—"If Joe Atlee be what she suspects, why does she call him very nice

for all that?" I said you intended to ask him down here next vacation, and she gave the drollest little laugh in the world—and does she not look lovely when she shows those small pearly teeth? Heaven help you, poor Dick, when you see her! but, if I were you, I should leave Master Joe behind me, for she smiles as she looks at his likeness in a way that would certainly make me jealous, if I were only Joe's friend, and not himself.

'We sat up in Nina's room till nigh morning, and to-day I have scarcely seen her, for she wants to be let sleep, after that long and tiresome journey, and I take the opportunity to write you this very rambling epistle; for you may feel sure I shall be less of a correspondent now than when I was without companionship, and I counsel you to be very grateful if you hear from me soon again.

'Papa wants to take Duggan's farm from him, and Lanty Moore's meadows, and throw them into the lawn; but I hope he won't persist in the plan; not alone because it is a mere extravagance, but that the county is very unsettled just now about land-tenure, and the people are hoping all sorts of things from Parliament, and any interference with them at this time would be ill taken. Father Cody was here yesterday, and told me confidentially to prevent papa—not so easy a thing as he thinks, particularly if he should come to suspect that any intimidation was intended—and Miss O'Shea unfortunately said something the other day that papa cannot get out of his head, and keeps on repeating. "So, then, it's our turn now," the fellows say; "the landlords have had five hundred years of it; it's time we should come in." And this he says over and over with a little laugh, and I wish to my heart Miss Betty had kept it to herself. By the way, her nephew is to come on leave, and pass two months with her; and she says she hopes you will be here at the same time, to keep him company; but I have a notion that another playfellow may prove a dangerous rival to the Hungarian hussar; perhaps, however, you would hand over Joe Atlee to him.

'Be sure you bring us some new books, and some music, when you come, or send them, if you don't come soon. I am terrified lest Nina should think the place dreary, and I don't know how she is to live here if she does not take to the vulgar drudgeries that fill my own life. When she abruptly asked me, "What do you do here?" I was sorely puzzled to know what to answer, and then she added quickly: "For my own part, it's no great matter, for I can always dream. I'm a great dreamer!" Is it not lucky for her, Dick? She'll have ample time for it here.

'I suppose I never wrote so long a letter as this in my life; indeed I never had a subject that had such a fascination for

myself. Do you know, Dick, that though I promised to let her sleep on till nigh dinner-time, I find myself every now and then creeping up gently to her door, and only bethink me of my pledge when my hand is on the lock; and sometimes I even doubt if she is here at all, and I am half crazy at fearing it may be all a dream.

'One word for yourself, and I have done. Why have you not told us of the examination? It was to have been on the 10th, and we are now at the 18th. Have you got—whatever it was? the prize, or the medal, or—the reward, in short, we were so anxiously hoping for? It would be such cheery tidings for poor papa, who is very low and depressed of late, and I see him always reading with such attention any notice of the college he can find in the newspaper. My dear, dear brother, how you would work hard if you only knew what a prize success in life might give you. Little as I have seen of her, I could guess that she will never bestow a thought on an undistinguished man. Come down for one day, and tell me if ever, in all your ambition, you had such a goal before you as this?

'The hoggets I sent in to Tullamore fair were not sold; but I believe Miss Betty's steward will take them; and, if so, I will send you ten pounds next week. I never knew the market so dull, and the English dealers now are only eager about horses, and I'm sure I couldn't part with any if I had them. With all my love, I am your ever affectionate sister, KATE KEARNEY.'

'I have just stepped into Nina's room and stolen the photo I send you. I suppose the dress must have been for some fancy ball; but she is a hundred million times more beautiful. I don't know if I shall have the courage to confess my theft to her.'

'Is that your sister, Dick?' said Joe Atlee, as young Kearney withdrew the carte from the letter, and placed it face downwards on the breakfast-table.

'No,' replied he bluntly, and continued to read on; while the other, in the spirit of that freedom that prevailed between them, stretched out his hand and took up the portrait.

'Who is this?' cried he, after some seconds. 'She's an actress. That's something like what the girl wears in *Don Cæsar de Bazan*. To be sure, she is Maritana. She's stunningly beautiful. Do you mean to tell me, Dick, that there's a girl like that on your provincial boards?'

'I never said so, any more than I gave you leave to examine the contents of my letters,' said the other haughtily.

'Egad, I'd have smashed the seal any day to have caught a glimpse of such a face as that. I'll wager her eyes are blue grey. Will you have a bet on it?'

'When you have done with your raptures, I'll thank you to hand the likeness to me.'

'But who is she? what is she? where is she? Is she the Greek?'

'When a fellow can help himself so coolly to his information as you do, I scarcely think he deserves much aid from others; but, I may tell you, she is not Maritana, nor a provincial actress, nor any actress at all, but a young lady of good blood and birth, and my own first cousin.'

'On my oath, it's the best thing I ever knew of you.'

Kearney laughed out at this moment at something in the letter, and did not hear the other's remark.

'It seems, Master Joe, that the young lady did not reciprocate the rapturous delight you feel, at sight of *your* picture. My sister says—I'll read you her very words—"she does not like the portrait of your friend Atlee; he may be clever and amusing, she says, but he is undeniably false." Mind that—undeniably false.'

'That's all the fault of the artist. The stupid dog would place me in so strong a light that I kept blinking.'

'No, no. She reads you like a book,' said the other.

'I wish to Heaven she would, if she would hold me like one.'

'And the nice way she qualifies your cleverness, by calling you amusing.'

'She could certainly spare that reproach to her cousin Dick,' said he, laughing; 'but no more of this sparring. When do you mean to take me down to the country with you? The term will be up on Tuesday.'

'That will demand a little consideration now. In the fall of the year, perhaps. When the sun is less powerful the light will be more favourable to your features.'

'My poor Dick, I cram you with good advice every day; but one counsel I never cease repeating, "Never try to be witty." A dull fellow only cuts his finger with a joke; he never catches it by the handle. Hand me over that letter of your sister's; I like the way she writes. All that about the pigs and the poultry is as good as the *Farmer's Chronicle*.'

The other made no other reply than by coolly folding up the letter and placing it in his pocket; and then, after a pause, he said—

'I shall tell Miss Kearney the favourable impression her

epistolary powers have produced on my very clever and accomplished chum, Mr. Atlee.'

'Do so; and say, if she'd take me for a correspondent instead of you, she'd be "exchanging with a difference." On my oath,' said he seriously, 'I believe a most finished education might be effected in letter-writing. I'd engage to take a clever girl through a whole course of Latin and Greek, and a fair share of mathematics and logic, in a series of letters, and her replies would be the fairest test of her acquirement.'

'Shall I propose this to my sister?'

'Do so, or to your cousin. I suspect Maritana would be an apter pupil.'

'The bell has stopped. We shall be late in the hall,' said Kearney, throwing on his gown hurriedly and hastening away; while Atlee, taking some proof-sheets from the chimney-piece, proceeded to correct them, a slight flicker of a smile still lingering over his dark but handsome face.

Though such little jarring passages as those we have recorded were nothing uncommon between these two young men, they were very good friends on the whole, the very dissimilarity that provoked their squabbles saving them from any more serious rivalry. In reality, no two people could be less alike: Kearney being a slow, plodding, self-satisfied, dull man, of very ordinary faculties; while the other was an indolent, discursive, sharp-witted fellow, mastering whatever he addressed himself to with ease, but so enamoured of novelty that he rarely went beyond a smattering of anything. He carried away college honours apparently at will, and might, many thought, have won a fellowship with little effort; but his passion was for change. Whatever bore upon the rogueries of letters, the frauds of literature, had an irresistible charm for him; and he once declared that he would almost rather have been Ireland than Shakespeare; and then it was his delight to write Greek versions of a poem that might attach the mark of plagiarism to Tennyson, or show, by a Scandinavian lyric, how the laureate had been poaching from the Northmen. Now it was a mock pastoral in most ecclesiastical Latin that set the whole Church in arms; now a mock despatch of Baron Beust that actually deceived the *Revue des Deux Mondes* and caused quite a panic at the Tuileries. He had established such relations with foreign journals that he could at any moment command insertion for a paper, now in the *Mémorial Diplomatique*, now in the *Golos* of St. Petersburg, or the *Allgemeine Zeitung*; while the comment, written also by himself, would appear in the *Kreuz Zeitung* or the *Times*; and the mystification became such that the shrewdest and keenest

heads were constantly misled, to which side to incline in a controversy where all the wires were pulled by one hand. Many a discussion on the authenticity of a document, or the veracity of a conversation, would take place between the two young men; Kearney not having the vaguest suspicion that the author of the point in debate was then sitting opposite to him, sometimes seeming to share the very doubts and difficulties that were then puzzling himself.

While Atlee knew Kearney in every fold and fibre of his nature, Kearney had not the very vaguest conception of him with whom he sat every day at meals, and communed through almost every hour of his life. He treated Joe, indeed, with a sort of proud protection, thinking him a sharp, clever, idle fellow, who would never come to anything higher than a bookseller's hack or an 'occasional correspondent.' He liked his ready speech, and his fun, but he would not consent to see in either evidences of anything beyond the amusing qualities of a very light intelligence. On the whole, he looked down upon him, as very properly the slow and ponderous people in life do look down upon their more volatile brethren, and vote them triflers. Long may it be so! There would be more sunstrokes in the world, if it were not that the shadows of dull men made such nice cool places for the others to walk in!

CHAPTER V

HOME LIFE AT THE CASTLE

The life of that quaint old country-house was something very strange and odd to Nina Kostalergi. It was not merely its quiet monotony, its unbroken sameness of topics as of events, and its small economies, always appearing on the surface; but that a young girl like Kate, full of life and spirits, gay, handsome, and high-hearted—that she should go her mill-round of these tiresome daily cares, listening to the same complaints, remedying the same evils, meeting the same difficulties, and yet never seem to resent an existence so ignoble and unworthy! This was, indeed, scarcely credible.

As for Nina herself—like one saved from shipwreck—her first sense of security was full of gratitude. It was only as this wore off that she began to see the desolation of the rock on which she had clambered. Not that her former life had been rose-tinted. It had been of all things the most harassing and wearing—a life

of dreary necessitude—a perpetual struggle with debt. Except play, her father had scarcely any resource for a livelihood. He affected, indeed, to give lessons in Italian and French to young Englishmen; but he was so fastidious as to the rank and condition of his pupils, so unaccommodating as to his hours and so unpunctual, that it was evident that the whole was a mere pretence of industry, to avoid the reproach of being utterly dependent on the play-table; besides this, in his capacity as a teacher he obtained access to houses and acceptance with families where he would have found entrance impossible under other circumstances.

He was polished and good-looking. All his habits bespoke familiarity with society; and he knew to the nicest fraction the amount of intimacy he might venture on with any one. Some did not like him—the man of a questionable position, the reduced gentleman, has terrible prejudices to combat. He must always be suspected—Heaven knows of what, but of some covert design against the religion or the pocket, or the influence of those who admit him. Some thought him dangerous because his manners were insinuating, and his address studiously directed to captivate. Others did not fancy his passion for mixing in the world, and frequenting society to which his straitened means appeared to deny him rightful access; but when he had succeeded in introducing his daughter to the world, and people began to say, 'See how admirably M. Kostalergi has brought up that girl! how nicely mannered she is, how ladylike, how well bred, what a linguist, what a musician!' a complete revulsion took place in public opinion, and many who had but half trusted, or less than liked him before, became now his staunchest friends and adherents. Nina had been a great success in society, and she reaped the full benefit of it. Sufficiently well born to be admitted, without any special condescension, into good houses, she was in manner and style the equal of any; and though her dress was ever of the cheapest and plainest, her fresh toilet was often commented on with praise by those who did not fully remember what added grace and elegance the wearer had lent it.

From the wealthy nobles to whom her musical genius had strongly recommended her, numerous and sometimes costly presents were sent in acknowledgment of her charming gifts; and these, as invariably, were converted into money by her father, who, after a while, gave it to be understood that the recompense would be always more welcome in that form.

Nina, however, for a long time knew nothing of this; she saw herself sought after and flattered in society, selected for peculiar attention wherever she went, complimented on her

acquirements, and made much of to an extent that not unfrequently excited the envy and jealousy of girls much more favourably placed by fortune than herself. If her long mornings and afternoons were passed amidst solitude and poverty, vulgar cares and harassing importunities, when night came, she emerged into the blaze of lighted lustres and gilded salons, to move in an atmosphere of splendour and sweet sounds, with all that could captivate the senses and exalt imagination. This twofold life of meanness and magnificence so wrought upon her nature as to develop almost two individualities. The one hard, stern, realistic, even to grudgingness; the other gay, buoyant, enthusiastic, and ardent; and they who only saw her of an evening in all the exultation of her flattered beauty, followed about by a train of admiring worshippers, addressed in all that exaggeration of language Italy sanctions, pampered by caresses, and honoured by homage on every side, little knew by what dreary torpor of heart and mind that joyous ecstasy they witnessed had been preceded, nor by what a bound her emotions had sprung from the depths of brooding melancholy to this paroxysm of delight; nor could the worn-out and wearied followers of pleasure comprehend the intense enjoyment produced by sights and sounds which in their case no fancy idealised, no soaring imagination had lifted to the heaven of bliss.

Kostalergi seemed for a while to content himself with the secret resources of his daughter's successes, but at length he launched out into heavy play once more, and lost largely. It was in this strait that he bethought him of negotiating with a theatrical manager for Nina's appearance on the stage. These contracts take the precise form of a sale, where the victim, in consideration of being educated, and maintained, and paid a certain amount, is bound, legally bound, to devote her services to a master for a given time. The impresario of the 'Fenice' had often heard from travellers of that wonderful mezzo-soprano voice which was captivating all Rome, where the beauty and grace of the singer were extolled not less loudly. The great skill of these astute providers for the world's pleasure is evidenced in nothing more remarkably than the instinctive quickness with which they pounce upon the indications of dramatic genius, and hasten away—half across the globe if need be—to secure it. Signor Lanari was not slow to procure a letter of introduction to Kostalergi, and very soon acquainted him with his object.

Under the pretence that he was an old friend and former schoolfellow, Kostalergi asked him to share their humble dinner, and there, in that meanly-furnished room, and with the accom-

paniment of a wretched and jangling instrument, Nina so astonished and charmed him by her performance, that all the habitual reserve of the cautious bargainer gave way, and he burst out into exclamations of enthusiastic delight, ending with—'She is mine! she is mine! I tell you, since Persiani, there has been nothing like her!'

Nothing remained now but to reveal the plan to herself, and though certainly neither the Greek nor his guest were deficient in descriptive power, or failed to paint in glowing colours the gorgeous processions of triumphs that await stage success, she listened with little pleasure to it all. She had already walked the boards of what she thought a higher arena. She had tasted flatteries unalloyed with any sense of decided inferiority; she had moved amongst dukes and duchesses with a recognised station, and received their compliments with ease and dignity. Was all this reality of condition to be exchanged for a mock splendour, and a feigned greatness? was she to be subjected to the licensed stare and criticism and coarse comment, it may be, of hundreds she never knew, nor would stoop to know? and was the adulation she now lived in to be bartered for the vulgar applause of those who, if dissatisfied, could testify the feeling as openly and unsparingly? She said very little of what she felt in her heart, but no sooner alone in her room at night, than she wrote that letter to her uncle entreating his protection.

It had been arranged with Lanari that she should make one appearance at a small provincial theatre so soon as she could master any easy part, and Kostalergi, having some acquaintance with the manager at Orvieto, hastened off there to obtain his permission for her appearance. It was of this brief absence she profited to fly from Rome, the banker conveying her as far as Civita Vecchia, whence she sailed direct for Marseilles. And now we see her, as she found herself in the dreary old Irish mansion, sad, silent, and neglected, wondering whether the past was all a dream, or if the unbroken calm in which she now lived was not a sleep.

Conceding her perfect liberty to pass her time how she liked, they exacted from her no appearance at meals, nor any conformity with the ways of others, and she never came to breakfast, and only entered the drawing-room a short time before dinner. Kate, who had counted on her companionship and society, and hoped to see her sharing with her the little cares and duties of her life, and taking interest in her pursuits, was sorely grieved at her estrangement, but continued to believe it would wear off with time and familiarity with the place. Kearney himself, in secret, resented

the freedom with which she disregarded the discipline of his house, and grumbled at times over foreign ways and habits that he had no fancy to see under his roof. When she did appear, however, her winning manners, her grace, and a certain half-caressing coquetry she could practise to perfection, so soothed and amused him that he soon forgot any momentary displeasure, and more than once gave up his evening visit to the club at Moate to listen to her as she sang, or hear her sketch off some trait of that Roman society in which British pretension and eccentricity often figured so amusingly.

Like a faithful son of the Church, too, he never wearied hearing of the Pope and of the Cardinals, of glorious ceremonials of the Church, and festivals observed with all the pomp and state that pealing organs, and incense, and gorgeous vestments could confer. The contrast between the sufferance under which his Church existed at home and the honours and homage rendered to it abroad, were a fruitful stimulant to that disaffection he felt towards England, and would not unfrequently lead him away to long diatribes about penal laws and the many disabilities which had enslaved Ireland, and reduced himself, the descendant of a princely race, to the condition of a ruined gentleman.

To Kate these complainings were ever distasteful; she had but one philosophy, which was 'to bear up well,' and when not that, 'as well as you could.' She saw scores of things around her to be remedied, or, at least, bettered, by a little exertion, and not one which could be helped by a vain regret. For the loss of that old barbaric splendour and profuse luxury which her father mourned over, she had no regrets. She knew that these wasteful and profligate livers had done nothing for the people either in act or in example; that they were a selfish, worthless, self-indulgent race, caring for nothing but their pleasures, and making all their patriotism consist in a hate towards England.

These were not Nina's thoughts. She liked all these stories of a time of power and might, when the Kearneys were great chieftains, and the old castle the scene of revelry and feasting.

She drew prettily, and it amused her to illustrate the curious tales the old man told her of rays and forays, the wild old life of savage chieftains and the scarcely less savage conquerors. On one of these—she called it 'The Return of O'Caharney'—she bestowed such labour and study, that her uncle would sit for hours watching the work, not knowing if his heart were more stirred by the claim of his ancestor's greatness, or by the marvellous skill that realised the whole scene before him. The head of the young chieftain was to be filled in when Dick came home. Mean-

while great persuasions were being used to induce Peter Gill to sit for a kern who had shared the exile of his masters, but had afterwards betrayed them to the English; and whether Gill had heard some dropping word of the part he was meant to fill, or that his own suspicion had taken alarm from certain directions the young lady gave as to the expression he was to assume, certain is it nothing could induce him to comply, and go down to posterity with the immortality of crime.

The little long-neglected drawing-room where Nina had set up her easel became now the usual morning lounge of the old man, who loved to sit and watch her as she worked, and, what amused him even more, listen while she talked. It seemed to him like a revival of the past to hear of the world, that gay world of feasting and enjoyment, of which for so many years he had known nothing; and here he was back in it again, and with grander company and higher names than he ever remembered. 'Why was not Kate like her?' would he mutter over and over to himself. Kate was a good girl, fine-tempered and happy-hearted, but she had no accomplishments, none of those refinements of the other. If he wanted to present her at 'the Castle' one of these days, he did not know if she would have tact enough for the ordeal; but Nina!—Nina was sure to make an actual sensation, as much by her grace and her style as by her beauty. Kearney never came into the room where she was without being struck by the elegance of her demeanour, the way she would rise to receive him, her step, her carriage, the very disposal of her drapery as she sat; the modulated tone of her voice, and a sort of purring satisfaction as she took his hand and heard his praises of her, spread like a charm over him, so that he never knew how the time slipped by as he sat beside her.

'Have you ever written to your father since you came here?' asked he one day as they talked together.

'Yes, sir; and yesterday I got a letter from him. Such a nice letter, sir—no complainings, no reproaches for my running away; but all sorts of good wishes for my happiness. He owns he was sorry to have ever thought of the stage for me; but he says this lawsuit he is engaged in about his grandfather's will may last for years, and that he knew I was so certain of a great success, and that a great success means more than mere money, he fancied that in my triumph he would reap the recompense for his own disasters. He is now, however, far happier that I have found a home, a real home, and says, "Tell my lord I am heartily ashamed of all my rudeness with regard to him, and would willingly make a pilgrimage to the end of Europe to ask his

pardon"; and say besides that "when I shall be restored to the fortune and rank of my ancestors"—you know,' added she, 'he is a prince—"my first act will be to throw myself at his feet, and beg to be forgiven by him."'

'What is the property? is it land?' asked he, with the half-suspectfulness of one not fully assured of what he was listening to.

'Yes, sir; the estate is in Delos. I have seen the plan of the grounds and gardens of the palace, which are princely. Here, on this seal,' said she, showing the envelope of her letter, 'you can see the arms; papa never omits to use it, though on his card he is written only "of the princes"—a form observed with us.'

'And what chance has he of getting it all back again?'

'That is more than I can tell you; he himself is sometimes very confident, and talks as if there could not be a doubt of it.'

'Used your poor mother to believe it?' asked he, half-tremulously.

'I can scarcely say, sir; I can barely remember her; but I have heard papa blame her for not interesting her high connections in England in his suit; he often thought that a word to the ambassador at Athens would have almost decided the case.'

'High connections, indeed!' burst he forth. 'By my conscience, they're pretty much out at elbows, like himself; and if we were trying to recover our own right to-morrow, the look-out would be bleak enough!'

'Papa is not easily cast down, sir; he has a very sanguine spirit.'

'Maybe you think it's what is wanting in my case, eh, Nina? Say it out, girl; tell me, I'd be the better for a little of your father's hopefulness, eh?'

'You could not change to anything I could like better than what you are,' said she, taking his hand and kissing it.

'Ah, you're a rare one to say coaxing things,' said he, looking fondly on her. 'I believe you'd be the best advocate for either of us if the courts would let you plead for us.'

'I wish they would, sir,' said she proudly.

'What is that?' cried he suddenly; 'sure it's not putting myself you are in the picture!'

'Of course I am, sir. Was not the O'Caharney your ancestor? Is it likely that an old race had not traits of feature and lineament that ages of descent could not efface? I'd swear that strong brow and frank look must be an heirloom.'

''Faith, then, almost the only one!' said he, sighing. 'Who's making that noise out there?' said he, rising and going to the window. 'Oh, it's Kate with her dogs. I often tell her she'd

'One more sitting I must have, sir, for the hair.'

keep a pair of ponies for less than those troublesome brutes cost her.'

'They are great company to her, she says, and she lives so much in the open air.'

'I know she does,' said he, dropping his head and sitting like one whose thoughts had taken a brooding, despondent turn.

'One more sitting I must have, sir, for the hair. You had it beautifully yesterday: it fell over on one side with a most perfect light on a large lock here. Will you give me half an hour to-morrow, say?'

'I can't promise you, my dear. Peter Gill has been urging me to go over to Loughrea for the fair; and if we go, we ought to be there by Saturday, and have a quiet look at the stock before the sales begin.'

'And are you going to be long away?' said she poutingly, as she leaned over the back of his chair, and suffered her curls to fall half across his face.

'I'll be right glad to be back again,' said he, pressing her head down till he could kiss her cheek, 'right glad!'

CHAPTER VI

THE 'BLUE GOAT'

THE 'Blue Goat' in the small town of Moate is scarcely a model hostel. The entrance-hall is too much encumbered by tramps and beggars of various orders and ages, who not only resort there to take their meals and play at cards, but to divide the spoils and settle the accounts of their several 'industries,' and occasionally to clear off other scores which demand police interference. On the left is the bar; the right-hand being used as the office of a land-agent is besieged by crowds of country-people, in whom, if language is to be trusted, the grievous wrongs of land-tenure are painfully portrayed—nothing but complaint, dogged determination, and resistance being heard on every side. Behind the bar is a long low-ceilinged apartment, the parlour *par excellence*, only used by distinguished visitors, and reserved on one especial evening of the week for the meeting of the 'Goats,' as the members of a club call themselves—the chief, indeed the founder, being our friend Mathew Kearney, whose title of sovereignty was 'Buck-Goat,' and whose portrait, painted by a native artist and presented by the society, figured over the mantel-piece. The village Van Dyck would seem to have invested largely in carmine,

and though far from parsimonious of it on the cheeks and the nose of his sitter, he was driven to work off some of his superabundant stock on the cravat, and even the hands, which, though amicably crossed in front of the white-waistcoated stomach, are fearfully suggestive of some recent deed of blood. The pleasant geniality of the countenance is, however, reassuring. Nor—except a decided squint, by which the artist had ambitiously attempted to convey a humoristic drollery to the expression—is there anything sinister in the portrait.

An inscription on the frame announces that this picture of their respected founder was presented, on his fiftieth birthday, 'To Mathew Kearney, sixth Viscount Kilgobbin'; various devices of 'caprine' significance, heads, horns, and hoofs, profusely decorating the frame. If the antiquary should lose himself in researches for the origin of this society, it is as well to admit at once that the landlord's sign of the 'Blue Goat' gave the initiative to the name, and that the worthy associates derived nothing from classical authority, and never assumed to be descendants of fauns or satyrs, but respectable shopkeepers of Moate, and unexceptional judges of 'poteen.' A large jug of this insinuating liquor figured on the table, and was called 'Goat's-milk'; and if these humoristic traits are so carefully enumerated, it is because they comprised all that was specially droll or quaint in these social gatherings, the members of which were a very commonplace set of men, who discussed their little local topics in very ordinary fashion, slightly elevated, perhaps, in self-esteem, by thinking how little the outer world knew of their dulness and dreariness.

As the meetings were usually determined on by the will of the president, who announced at the hour of separation when they were to reassemble, and as, since his niece's arrival, Kearney had almost totally forgotten his old associates, the club-room ceased to be regarded as the holy of holies, and was occasionally used by the landlord for the reception of such visitors as he deemed worthy of peculiar honour.

It was on a very wet night of that especially rainy month in the Irish calendar, July, that two travellers sat over a turf fire in this sacred chamber, various articles of their attire being spread out to dry before the blaze, the owners of which actually steamed with the effects of the heat upon their damp habiliments. Some fishing-tackle and two knapsacks, which lay in a corner, showed they were pedestrians, and their looks, voice, and manner proclaimed them still more unmistakably to be gentlemen.

One was a tall, sunburnt, soldierlike man of six or seven-and-thirty, powerfully built, and with that solidity of gesture and

firmness of tread sometimes so marked with strong men. A mere glance at him showed he was a cold, silent, somewhat haughty man, not given to hasty resolves or in any way impulsive, and it is just possible that a long acquaintance with him would not have revealed a great deal more. He had served in a half-dozen regiments, and although all declared that Henry Lockwood was an honourable fellow, a good soldier, and thoroughly 'safe'—a very meaning epithet—there were no very deep regrets when he 'exchanged,' nor was there, perhaps, one man who felt he had lost his 'pal' by his going. He was now in the Carbineers, and serving as an extra aide-de-camp to the Viceroy.

Not a little unlike him in most respects was the man who sat opposite him—a pale, finely-featured, almost effeminate-looking young fellow, with a small line of dark moustache, and a beard *en Henri Quatre*, to the effect of which a collar cut in Van Dyck fashion gave an especial significance. Cecil Walpole was disposed to be pictorial in his get-up, and the purple dye of his knickerbocker stockings, the slouching plumage of his Tyrol hat, and the graceful hang of his jacket, had excited envy in quarters where envy was fame. He too was on the viceregal staff, being private secretary to his relative the Lord-Lieutenant, during whose absence in England they had undertaken a ramble to the Westmeath lakes, not very positive whether their object was to angle for trout or to fish for that 'knowledge of Ireland' so popularly sought after in our day, and which displays itself so profusely in platform speeches and letters to the *Times*. Lockwood, not impossibly, would have said it was 'to do a bit of walking' he had come. He had gained eight pounds by that indolent Phœnix-Park life he was leading, and he had no fancy to go back to Leicestershire too heavy for his cattle. He was not—few hunting men are—an ardent fisherman; and as for the vexed question of Irish politics, he did not see why he was to trouble his head to unravel the puzzles that were too much for Mr. Gladstone; not to say, that he felt to meddle with these matters was like interfering with another man's department. 'I don't suspect,' he would say, 'I should fancy John Bright coming down to "stables" and dictating to me how my Irish horses should be shod, or what was the best bit for a "borer."' He saw, besides, that the game of politics was a game of compromises: something was deemed admirable now that had been hitherto almost execrable; and that which was utterly impossible to-day, if done last year would have been a triumphant success, and consequently he pronounced the whole thing an 'imposition and a humbug.

'I can understand a right and a wrong as well as any man,' he would say, 'but I know nothing about things that are neither or both, according to who's in or who's out of the Cabinet. Give me the command of twelve thousand men, let me divide them into three flying columns, and if I don't keep Ireland quiet, draft me into a West Indian regiment, that's all.' And as to the idea of issuing special commissions, passing new Acts of Parliament, or suspending old ones, to do what he or any other intelligent soldier could do without any knavery or any corruption, 'John Bright might tell us,' but he couldn't. And here it may be well to observe that it was a favourite form of speech with him to refer to this illustrious public man in this familiar manner; but always to show what a condition of muddle and confusion must ensue if we followed the counsels that name emblematised; nor did he know a more cutting sarcasm to reply to an adversary than when he had said, 'Oh, John Bright would agree with you,' or, 'I don't think John Bright could go further.'

Of a very different stamp was his companion. He was a young gentleman whom we cannot more easily characterise than by calling him in the cant of the day, 'of the period.' He was essentially the most recent product of the age we live in. Manly enough in some things, he was fastidious in others to the very verge of effeminacy; an aristocrat by birth and by predilection, he made a parade of democratic opinions. He affected a sort of Crichtonism in the variety of his gifts, and as linguist, musician, artist, poet, and philosopher, loved to display the scores of things he might be, instead of that mild, very ordinary young gentleman that he was. He had done a little of almost everything: he had been in the Guards, in diplomacy, in the House for a brief session, had made an African tour, written a pleasant little book about the Nile, with the illustrations by his own hand. Still he was greater in promise than performance. There was an opera of his partly finished; a five-act comedy almost ready for the stage; a half-executed group he had left in some studio in Rome showed what he might have done in sculpture. When his distinguished relative the Marquis of Danesbury recalled him from his post as secretary of legation in Italy, to join him at his Irish seat of government, the phrase in which he invited him to return is not without its significance, and we give it as it occurred in the context: 'I have no fancy for the post they have assigned me, nor is it what I had hoped for. They say, however, I shall succeed here. *Nous verrons.* Meanwhile, I remember your often remarking, "There is a great game to be played in Ireland." Come over at once, then, and let me

have a talk with you over it. I shall manage the question of your leave by making you private secretary for the moment. We shall have many difficulties, but Ireland will be the worst of them. Do not delay, therefore, for I shall only go over to be sworn in, etc., and return for the third reading of the Church Bill, and I should like to see you in Dublin (and leave you there) when I go.'

Except that they were both members of the viceregal household, and English by birth, there was scarcely a tie between these very dissimilar natures; but somehow the accidents of daily life, stronger than the traits of disposition, threw them into intimacy, and they agreed it would be a good thing 'to see something of Ireland'; and with this wise resolve they had set out on that half-fishing excursion, which, having taken them over the Westmeath lakes, now was directing them to the Shannon, but with an infirmity of purpose to which lack of sport and disastrous weather were contributing powerfully at the moment we have presented them to our reader.

To employ the phrase which it is possible each might have used, they 'liked each other well enough'—that is, each found something in the other he 'could get on with'; but there was no stronger tie of regard or friendship between them, and each thought he perceived some flaw of pretension, or affected wisdom, or selfishness, or vanity, in the other, and actually believed he amused himself by its display. In natures, tastes, and dispositions, they were miles asunder, and disagreement between them would have been unceasing on every subject, had they not been gentlemen. It was this alone—this gentleman element—made their companionship possible, and, in the long-run, not unpleasant. So much more has good-breeding to do in the common working of daily life than the more valuable qualities of mind and temperament.

Though much younger than his companion, Walpole took the lead in all the arrangements of the journey, determined where and how long they should halt, and decided on the route next to be taken; the other showing a real or affected indifference on all these matters, and making of his town-bred apathy a very serviceable quality in the midst of Irish barbarism and desolation. On politics, too—if that be the name for such light convictions as they entertained—they differed: the soldier's ideas being formed on what he fancied would be the late Duke of Wellington's opinion, and consisted in what he called 'putting down.' Walpole was a promising Whig; that is, one who coquets with Radical notions, but fastidiously avoids contact with the mob; and who,

fervently believing that all popular concessions are spurious if not stamped with Whig approval, would like to treat the democratic leaders as forgers and knaves.

If, then, there was not much of similarity between these two men to attach them to each other, there was what served for a bond of union: they belonged to the same class in life, and used pretty nigh the same forms for their expression of like and dislike; and as in traffic it contributes wonderfully to the facilities of business to use the same money, so in the common intercourse of life will the habit to estimate things at the same value conduce to very easy relations, and something almost like friendship.

While they sat over the fire awaiting their supper, each had lighted a cigar, busying himself from time to time in endeavouring to dry some drenched article of dress, or extracting from damp and dripping pockets their several contents.

'This, then,' said the younger man—'this is the picturesque Ireland our tourist writers tell us of; and the land where the *Times* says the traveller will find more to interest him than in the Tyrol or the Oberland.'

'What about the climate?' said the other, in a deep bass voice.

'Mild and moist, I believe, are the epithets; that is, it makes you damp, and it keeps you so.'

'And the inns?'

'The inns, it is admitted, might be better; but the traveller is admonished against fastidiousness, and told that the prompt spirit of obligeance, the genial cordiality, he will meet with, are more than enough to repay him for the want of more polished habits and mere details of comfort and convenience.'

'Rotten humbug! *I* don't want cordiality from my innkeeper.'

'I should think not! As, for instance, a bit of carpet in this room would be worth more than all the courtesy that showed us in.'

'What was that lake called—the first place I mean?' asked Lockwood.

'Lough Brin. I shouldn't say but with better weather it might be pretty.'

A half-grunt of dissent was all the reply, and Walpole went on—

'It's no use painting a landscape when it is to be smudged all over with Indian ink. There are no tints in mountains swathed in mist, no colour in trees swamped with moisture; everything seems so imbued with damp, one fancies it would take two years in the tropics to dry Ireland.'

'I asked that fellow who showed us the way here, why he

didn't pitch off those wet rags he wore, and walk away in all the dignity of nakedness.'

A large dish of rashers and eggs, and a mess of Irish stew, which the landlord now placed on the table, with a foaming jug of malt, seemed to rally them out of their ill-temper; and for some time they talked away in a more cheerful tone.

'Better than I hoped for,' said Walpole.

'Fair!'

'And that ale, too—I suppose it is called ale—is very tolerable.'

'It's downright good. Let us have some more of it.' And he shouted, 'Master!' at the top of his voice. 'More of this,' said Lockwood, touching the measure. 'Beer or ale, which is it?'

'Castle Bellingham, sir,' replied the landlord; 'beats all the Bass and Allsopp that ever was brewed.'

'You think so, eh?'

'I'm sure of it, sir. The club that sits here had a debate on it one night, and put it to the vote, and there wasn't one man for the English liquor. My lord there,' said he, pointing to the portrait, 'sent an account of it all to *Saunders'* newspaper.'

While he left the room to fetch the ale, the travellers both fixed their eyes on the picture, and Walpole, rising, read out the inscription—'Viscount Kilgobbin.'

'There's no such title,' said the other bluntly.

'Lord Kilgobbin—Kilgobbin? Where did I hear that name before?'

'In a dream, perhaps.'

'No, no. I *have* heard it, if I could only remember where and how! I say, landlord, where does his lordship live?' and he pointed to the portrait.

'Beyond, at the castle, sir. You can see it from the door without when the weather's fine.'

'That must mean on a very rare occasion!' said Lockwood gravely.

'No indeed, sir. It didn't begin to rain on Tuesday last till after three o'clock.'

'Magnificent climate!' exclaimed Walpole enthusiastically.

'It is indeed, sir. Glory be to God!' said the landlord, with an honest gravity that set them both off laughing.

'How about this club—does it meet often?'

'It used, sir, to meet every Thursday evening, and my lord never missed a night, but quite lately he took it in his head not to come out in the evenings. Some say it was the rheumatism,

and more says it's the unsettled state of the country; though, the Lord be praised for it, there wasn't a man fired at in the neighbourhood since Easter, and *he* was a peeler.'

'One of the constabulary?'

'Yes, sir; a dirty, mean chap, that was looking after a poor boy that set fire to Mr. Hagin's ricks, and that was over a year ago.'

'And naturally forgotten by this time?'

'By coorse it was forgotten. Ould Mat Hagin got a presentment for the damage out of the grand-jury, and nobody was the worse for it at all.'

'And so the club is smashed, eh?'

'As good as smashed, sir; for whenever any of them comes now of an evening, he just goes into the bar and takes his glass there.'

He sighed heavily as he said this, and seemed overcome with sadness.

'I'm trying to remember why the name is so familiar to me. I know I have heard of Lord Kilgobbin before,' said Walpole.

'Maybe so,' said the landlord respectfully. 'You may have read in books how it was at Kilgobbin Castle King James came to stop after the Boyne; that he held a "coort" there in the big drawing-room—they call it the "throne-room" ever since—and slept two nights at the castle afterwards?'

'That's something to see, Walpole,' said Lockwood.

'So it is. How is that to be managed, landlord? Does his lordship permit strangers to visit the castle?'

'Nothing easier than that, sir,' said the host, who gladly embraced a project that should detain his guests at the inn. 'My lord went through the town this morning on his way to Loughrea fair; but the young ladies is at home; and you've only to send over a message, and say you'd like to see the place, and they'll be proud to show it to you.'

'Let us send our cards, with a line in pencil,' said Walpole, in a whisper to his friend.

'And there are young ladies there?' asked Lockwood.

'Two born beauties; it's hard to say which is handsomest,' replied the host, overjoyed at the attraction his neighbourhood possessed.

'I suppose that will do?' said Walpole, showing what he had written on his card.

'Yes, perfectly.'

'Despatch this at once. I mean early to-morrow; and let your messenger ask if there be an answer. How far is it off?'

'A little over twelve miles, sir; but I've a mare in the stable will "rowle" ye over in an hour and a quarter.'

'All right. We'll settle on everything after breakfast to-morrow.' And the landlord withdrew, leaving them once more alone.

'This means,' said Lockwood drearily, 'we shall have to pass a day in this wretched place.'

'It will take a day to dry our wet clothes; and, all things considered, one might be worse off than here. Besides, I shall want to look over my notes. I have done next to nothing, up to this time, about the Land Question.'

'I thought that the old fellow with the cow, the fellow I gave a cigar to, had made you up in your tenant-right affair,' said Lockwood.

'He gave me a great deal of very valuable information; he exposed some of the evils of tenancy at will as ably as I ever heard them treated, but he was occasionally hard on the landlord.'

'I suppose one word of truth never came out of his mouth!'

'On the contrary, real knowledge of Ireland is not to be acquired from newspapers; a man must see Ireland for himself—*see* it,' repeated he, with strong emphasis.

'And then?'

'And then, if he be a capable man, a reflecting man, a man in whom the perceptive power is joined to the social faculty——'

'Look here, Cecil, one hearer won't make a House: don't try it on speechifying to me. It's all humbug coming over to look at Ireland. You may pick up a little brogue, but it's all you'll pick up for your journey.' After this, for him, unusually long speech, he finished his glass, lighted his bedroom candle, and nodding a good-night, strolled away.

'I'd give a crown to know where I heard of you before!' said Walpole, as he stared up at the portrait.

CHAPTER VII

THE COUSINS

'ONLY think of it!' cried Kate to her cousin, as she received Walpole's note. 'Can you fancy, Nina, any one having the curiosity to imagine this old house worth a visit? Here is a polite request from two tourists to be allowed to see the—what is it?—the interesting interior of Kilgobbin Castle!'

'Which I hope and trust you will refuse. The people who are

so eager for these things are invariably tiresome old bores, grubbing for antiquities, or intently bent on adding a chapter to their story of travel. You 'll say No, dearest, won't you?'

'Certainly, if you wish it. I am not acquainted with Captain Lockwood, nor his friend Mr. Cecil Walpole.'

'Did you say Cecil Walpole?' cried the other, almost snatching the card from her fingers. 'Of all the strange chances in life, this is the very strangest! What could have brought Cecil Walpole here?'

'You know him, then?'

'I should think I do! What duets have we not sung together? What waltzes have we not had? What rides over the Campagna? Oh dear! how I should like to talk over these old times again! Pray tell him he may come, Kate, or let me do it.'

'And papa away!'

'It is the castle, dearest, he wants to see, not papa! You don't know what manner of creature this is! He is one of your refined and supremely cultivated English—mad about archæology and mediæval trumpery. He 'll know all your ancestors intended by every insane piece of architecture, and every puzzling detail of this old house; and he 'll light up every corner of it with some gleam of bright tradition.'

'I thought these sort of people were bores, dear?' said Kate, with a sly malice in her look.

'Of course not. When they are well-bred and well-mannered——'

'And perhaps well-looking?' chimed in Kate.

'Yes, and so he is—a little of the *petit-maître*, perhaps. He 's much of that school which fiction-writers describe as having "finely-pencilled eyebrows, and chins of almost womanlike roundness"; but people in Rome always called him handsome, that is if he be my Cecil Walpole.'

'Well, then, will you tell YOUR Cecil Walpole, in such polite terms as you know how to coin, that there is really nothing of the very slightest pretension to interest in this old place; that we should be ashamed at having lent ourselves to the delusion that might have led him here; and lastly, that the owner is from home?'

'What! and is this the Irish hospitality I have heard so much of—the cordial welcome the stranger may reckon on as a certainty, and make all his plans with the full confidence of meeting?'

'There is such a thing as discretion, also, to be remembered, Nina,' said Kate gravely.

'And then there's the room where the king slept, and the chair that—no, not Oliver Cromwell, but somebody else sat in at supper, and there's the great patch painted on the floor where your ancestor knelt to be knighted.'

'He was created a viscount, not a knight!' said Kate blushing. 'And there is a difference, I assure you.'

'So there is, dearest, and even my foreign ignorance should know that much, and you have the parchment that attests it—a most curious document, that Walpole would be delighted to see. I almost fancy him examining the curious old seal with his microscope, and hear him unfolding all sorts of details one never so much as suspected.'

'Papa might not like it,' said Kate, bridling up. 'Even were he at home, I am far from certain he would receive these gentlemen. It is little more than a year ago there came here a certain book-writing tourist, and presented himself without introduction. We received him hospitably, and he stayed part of a week here. He was fond of antiquarianism, but more eager still about the condition of the people—what kind of husbandry they practised, what wages they had, and what food. Papa took him over the whole estate, and answered all his questions freely and openly. And this man made a chapter of his book upon us, and headed it, "Rack-renting and riotous living," distorting all he heard and sneering at all he saw.'

'These are gentlemen, dearest Kate,' said Nina, holding out the card. 'Come now, do tell me that I may say you will be happy to see them!'

'If you must have it so—if you really insist——'

'I do! I do!' cried she, half wildly. 'I should go distracted if you denied me. O Kate! I must own it. It will out. I do cling devotedly, terribly, to that old life of the past. I am very happy here, and you are all good, and kind, and loving to me; but that wayward, haphazard existence, with all its trials and miseries, had got little glimpses of such bliss at times that rose to actual ecstasy.'

'I was afraid of this,' said Kate, in a low but firm voice. 'I thought what a change it would be for you from that life of brightness and festivity to this existence of dull and unbroken dreariness.'

'No, no, no! Don't say that! Do not fancy that I am not happier than I ever was or ever believed I could be. It was the castle-building of that time I was regretting. I imagined so many things, I invented such situations, such incidents, which, with this sad-coloured landscape here and that leaden sky, I have

no force to conjure up. It is as though the atmosphere is too weighty for fancy to mount in it. You, my dearest Kate,' said she, drawing her arm round her, and pressing her towards her, 'do not know these things, nor need ever know them. Your life is assured and safe. You cannot, indeed, be secure from the passing accidents of life, but they will meet you in a spirit able to confront them. As for me, I was always gambling for existence, and gambling without means to pay my losses if Fortune should turn against me. Do you understand me, child?'

'Only in part, if even that,' said she slowly.

'Let us keep this theme, then, for another time. Now for *ces messieurs*. I am to invite them?'

'If there was time to ask Miss O'Shea to come over——'

'Do you not fancy, Kate, that in your father's house, surrounded with your father's servants, you are sufficiently the mistress to do without a chaperon? Only preserve that grand austere look you have listened to me with these last ten minutes, and I should like to see the youthful audacity that could brave it. There, I shall go and write my note. You shall see how discreetly and properly I shall word it.'

Kate walked thoughtfully towards a window and looked out, while Nina skipped gaily down the room, and opened her writing-desk, humming an opera air as she wrote:—

'Kilgobbin Castle.

'Dear Mr. Walpole,—I can scarcely tell you the pleasure I feel at the prospect of seeing a dear friend, or a friend from dear Italy, whichever be the most proper to say. My uncle is from home, and will not return till the day after to-morrow at dinner; but my cousin, Miss Kearney, charges me to say how happy she will be to receive you and your fellow-traveller at luncheon to-morrow. Pray not to trouble yourself with an answer, but believe me very sincerely yours,

'Nina Kostalergi.'

'I was right in saying luncheon, Kate, and not dinner—was I not? It is less formal.'

'I suppose so; that is, if it was right to invite them at all, of which I have very great misgivings.'

'I wonder what brought Cecil Walpole down here?' said Nina, glad to turn the discussion into another channel. 'Could he have heard that I was here? Probably not. It was a mere chance, I suppose. Strange things these same chances are, that do so much more in our lives than all our plottings!'

'Tell me something of your friend, perhaps I ought to say your admirer, Nina!'

'Yes, very much my admirer; not seriously, you know, but in that charming sort of adoration we cultivate abroad, that means anything or nothing. He was not titled, and I am afraid he was not rich, and this last misfortune used to make his attention to me somewhat painful—to *him* I mean, not to *me*; for, of course, as to anything serious, I looked much higher than a poor Secretary of Legation.'

'Did you?' asked Kate, with an air of quiet simplicity.

'I should hope I did,' said she haughtily; and she threw a glance at herself in a large mirror, and smiled proudly at the bright image that confronted her. 'Yes, darling, say it out,' cried she, turning to Kate. 'Your eyes have uttered the words already.'

'What words?'

'Something about insufferable vanity and conceit, and I own to both! Oh, why is it that my high spirits have so run away with me this morning that I have forgotten all reserve and all shame? But the truth is, I feel half wild with joy, and joy in *my* nature is another name for recklessness.'

'I sincerely hope not,' said Kate gravely. 'At any rate, you give me another reason for wishing to have Miss O'Shea here.'

'I will not have her—no, not for worlds, Kate, that odious old woman, with her stiff and antiquated propriety. Cecil would quiz her.'

'I am very certain he would not; at least, if he be such a perfect gentleman as you tell me.'

'Ah, but you'd never know he did it. The fine tact of these consummate men of the world derives a humoristic enjoyment in eccentricity of character, which never shows itself in any outward sign beyond the heightened pleasure they feel in what other folks might call dullness or mere oddity.'

'I would not suffer an old friend to be made the subject of even such latent amusement.'

'Nor her nephew, either, perhaps?'

'The nephew could take care of himself, Nina; but I am not aware that he will be called on to do so. He is not in Ireland, I believe.'

'He was to arrive this week. You told me so.'

'Perhaps he did; I had forgotten it!' and Kate flushed as she spoke, though whether from shame or anger it was not easy to say. As though impatient with herself at any display of temper, she added hurriedly, 'Was it not a piece of good fortune,

Nina? Papa has left us the key of the cellar, a thing he never did before, and only now because you were here!'

'What an honoured guest I am!' said the other, smiling.

'That you are! I don't believe papa has gone once to the club since you came here.'

'Now, if I were to own that I was vain of this, you'd rebuke me, would not you?'

'*Our* love could scarcely prompt to vanity.'

'How shall I ever learn to be humble enough in a family of such humility?' said Nina pettishly. Then quickly correcting herself, she said, 'I'll go and despatch my note, and then I'll come back and ask your pardon for all my wilfulness, and tell you how much I thank you for all your goodness to me.'

And as she spoke she bent down and kissed Kate's hand twice or thrice fervently.

'Oh, dearest Nina, not this—not this!' said Kate, trying to clasp her in her arms; but the other had slipped from her grasp, and was gone.

'Strange girl,' muttered Kate, looking after her. 'I wonder shall I ever understand you, or shall we ever understand each other?'

CHAPTER VIII

SHOWING HOW FRIENDS MAY DIFFER

The morning broke drearily for our friends, the two pedestrians, at the 'Blue Goat.' A day of dull aspect and soft rain in mid-summer has the added depression that it seems an anachronism. One is in a measure prepared for being weather-bound in winter. You accept imprisonment as the natural fortune of the season, or you brave the elements prepared to let them do their worst, while, if confined to house, you have that solace of snugness, that comfortable chimney-corner which somehow realises an immense amount of the joys we concentrate in the word 'Home.' It is in the want of this rallying-point, this little domestic altar, where all gather together in a common worship, that lies the dreary discomfort of being weather-bound in summer, and when the prison is some small village inn, noisy, disorderly, and dirty, the misery is complete.

'Grand old pig that!' said Lockwood, as he gazed out upon the filthy yard, where a fat old sow contemplated the weather from the threshold of her dwelling.

'I wish she'd come out. I want to make a sketch of her,' said the other.

'Even one's tobacco grows too damp to smoke in this blessed climate,' said Lockwood, as he pitched his cigar away. 'Heigh-ho! We're too late for the train to town, I see.'

'You'd not go back, would you?'

'I should think I would! That old den in the upper castle-yard is not very cheery or very nice, but there is a chair to sit on, and a review and a newspaper to read. A tour in a country and with a climate like this is a mistake.'

'I suspect it is,' said Walpole drearily.

'There is nothing to see, no one to talk to, nowhere to stop at!'

'All true,' muttered the other. 'By the way, haven't we some plan or project for to-day—something about an old castle or an abbey to see?'

'Yes, and the waiter brought me a letter. I think it was addressed to you, and I left it on my dressing-table. I had forgotten all about it. I'll go and fetch it.'

Short as his absence was, it gave Walpole time enough to recur to his late judgment on his tour, and once more call it a 'mistake, a complete mistake.' The Ireland of wits, dramatists, and romance-writers was a conventional thing, and bore no resemblance whatsoever to the rain-soaked, dreary-looking, depressed reality. 'These Irish, they are odd without being droll, just as they are poor without being picturesque; but of all the delusions we nourish about them, there is not one so thoroughly absurd as to call them dangerous.'

He had just arrived at this mature opinion, when his friend re-entered and handed him the note.

'Here is a piece of luck. *Per Bacco!*' cried Walpole, as he ran over the lines. 'This beats all I could have hoped for. Listen to this—"Dear Mr. Walpole,—I cannot tell you the delight I feel in the prospect of seeing a dear friend, or a friend from dear Italy, which is it?"'

'Who writes this?'

'A certain Mademoiselle Kostalergi, whom I knew at Rome; one of the prettiest, cleverest, and nicest girls I ever met in my life.'

'Not the daughter of that precious Count Kostalergi you have told me such stories of?'

'The same, but most unlike him in every way. She is here, apparently with an uncle, who is now from home, and she and her cousin invite us to luncheon to-day.'

'What a lark!' said the other dryly.

'We'll go, of course?'

'In weather like this?'

'Why not? Shall we be better off staying here. I now begin to remember how the name of this place was so familiar to me. She was always asking me if I knew or heard of her mother's brother, the Lord Kilgobbin, and, to tell truth, I fancied some one had been hoaxing her with the name, and never believed that there was even a place with such a designation.'

'Kilgobbin does not sound like a lordly title. How about Mademoiselle—what is the name?'

'Kostalergi; they call themselves princes.'

'With all my heart. I was only going to say, as you've got a sort of knack of entanglement—is there, or has there been, anything of that sort here?'

'Flirtation—a little of what is called "spooning"—but no more. But why do you ask?'

'First of all, you are an engaged man.'

'All true, and I mean to keep my engagement. I can't marry, however, till I get a mission, or something at home as good as a mission. Lady Maude knows that; her friends know it, but none of us imagine that we are to be miserable in the meantime.'

'I'm not talking of misery. I'd only say, don't get yourself into any mess. These foreign girls are very wide-awake.'

'Don't believe that, Harry; one of our home-bred damsels would give them a distance and beat them in the race for a husband. It's only in England girls are trained to angle for marriage, take my word for it.'

'Be it so—I only warn you that if you get into any scrape I'll accept none of the consequences. Lord Danesbury is ready enough to say that, because I am some ten years older than you, I should have kept you out of mischief. I never contracted for such a bear-leadership; though I certainly told Lady Maude I'd turn Queen's evidence against you if you became a traitor.'

'I wonder you never told me that before,' said Walpole, with some irritation of manner.

'I only wonder that I told it now!' replied the other gruffly.

'Then I am to take it, that in your office of guardian, you'd rather we'd decline this invitation, eh?'

'I don't care a rush for it either way, but, looking to the sort of day it is out there, I incline to keep the house.'

'I don't mind bad weather, and I'll go,' said Walpole, in a way that showed temper was involved in the resolution.

Lockwood made no other reply than heaping a quantity of turf on the fire, and seating himself beside it.

When a man tells his fellow-traveller that he means to go his own road—that companionship has no tie upon him—he virtually declares the partnership dissolved; and while Lockwood sat reflecting over this, he was also canvassing with himself how far he might have been to blame in provoking this hasty resolution.

'Perhaps he was irritated at my counsels, perhaps the notion of anything like guidance offended him; perhaps it was the phrase, "bear-leadership," and the half-threat of betraying him, has done the mischief.' Now the gallant soldier was a slow thinker; it took him a deal of time to arrange the details of any matter in his mind, and when he tried to muster his ideas there were many which would not answer the call, and of those which came, there were not a few which seemed to present themselves in a refractory and unwilling spirit, so that he had almost to suppress a mutiny before he proceeded to his inspection.

Nor did the strong cheroots, which he smoked to clear his faculties and develop his mental resources, always contribute to this end, though their soothing influence certainly helped to make him more satisfied with his judgments.

'Now, look here, Walpole,' said he, determining that he would save himself all unnecessary labour of thought by throwing the burden of the case on the respondent—'Look here; take a calm view of this thing, and see if it's quite wise in you to go back into trammels it cost you some trouble to escape from. You call it spooning, but you won't deny you went very far with that young woman—farther, I suspect, than you've told me yet. Eh! is that true or not?'

He waited a reasonable time for a reply, but none coming, he went on—'I don't want a forced confidence. You may say it's no business of mine, and there I agree with you, and probably if you put *me* to the question in the same fashion, I'd give you a very short answer. Remember one thing, however, old fellow—I've seen a precious deal more of life and the world than you have! From sixteen years of age, when *you* were hammering away at Greek verbs and some such balderdash at Oxford, I was up at Rangoon with the very fastest set of men—ay, of women too—I ever lived with in all my life. Half of our fellows were killed off by it. Of course people will say climate, climate! but if I were to give you the history of one day—just twenty-four hours of our life up there—you'd say that the wonder is there's any one alive to tell it.'

He turned around at this, to enjoy the expression of horror and surprise he hoped to have called up, and perceived for the first time that he was alone. He rang the bell, and asked the

waiter where the other gentleman had gone, and learned that he had ordered a car, and set out for Kilgobbin Castle more than half an hour before.

'All right,' said he fiercely. 'I wash my hands of it altogether! I'm heartily glad I told him so before he went.' He smoked on very vigorously for half an hour, the burden of his thoughts being perhaps revealed by the summing-up, as he said, 'And when you are "in for it," Master Cecil, and some precious scrape it will be, if I move hand or foot to pull you through it, call me a Major of Marines, that's all—just call me a Major of Marines!' The ineffable horror of such an imputation served as matter for reverie for hours.

CHAPTER IX

A DRIVE THROUGH A BOG

While Lockwood continued thus to doubt and debate with himself, Walpole was already some miles on his way to Kilgobbin. Not, indeed, that he had made any remarkable progress, for the 'mare that was to rowle his honour over in an hour and a quarter,' had to be taken from the field where she had been ploughing since daybreak, while 'the boy' that should drive her, was a little old man who had to be aroused from a condition of drunkenness in a hayloft, and installed in his office.

Nor were these the only difficulties. The roads that led through the bog were so numerous and so completely alike that it only needed the dense atmosphere of a rainy day to make it matter of great difficulty to discover the right track. More than once were they obliged to retrace their steps after a considerable distance, and the driver's impatience always took the shape of a reproach to Walpole, who, having nothing else to do, should surely have minded where they were going. Now, not only was the traveller utterly ignorant of the geography of the land he journeyed in, but his thoughts were far and away from the scenes around him. Very scattered and desultory thoughts were they, at one time over the Alps and with 'long-agoes': nights at Rome clashing with mornings on the Campagna; vast salons crowded with people of many nations, all more or less busy with that great traffic which, whether it take the form of religion, or politics, or social intrigue, hate, love, or rivalry, makes up what we call 'the world'; or there were sunsets dying away rapidly—as they will do—over that great plain outside the city, whereon solitude

and silence are as much masters as on a vast prairie of the West; and he thought of times when he rode back at nightfall beside Nina Kostalergi, when little flashes would cross them of that romance that very worldly folk now and then taste of, and delight in, with a zest all the greater that the sensation is so new and strange to them. Then there was the revulsion from the blaze of waxlights and the glitter of diamonds, the crash of orchestras and the din of conversation, the intoxication of the flattery that champagne only seems to 'accentuate,' to the unbroken stillness of the hour when even the footfall of the horse is unheard, and a dreamy doubt that this quietude, this soothing sense of calm, is higher happiness than all the glitter and all the splendour of the ball-room, and that in the dropping words we now exchange, and in the stray glances, there is a significance and an exquisite delight we never felt till now; for, glorious as is the thought of a returned affection, full of ecstasy the sense of a heart all, all our own, there is, in the first half-doubtful, distrustful feeling of falling in love, with all its chances of success or failure, something that has its moments of bliss nothing of earthly delight can ever equal. To the verge of that possibility Walpole has reached—but gone no further—with Nina Kostalergi. The young men of the age are an eminently calculating and prudent class, and they count the cost of an action with a marvellous amount of accuracy. Is it the turf and its teachings to which this crafty and cold-blooded spirit is owing? Have they learned to 'square their book' on life by the lessons of Ascot and Newmarket, and seen that, no matter how probably they 'stand to win' on this, they must provide for that, and that no caution or foresight is enough that will not embrace every casualty of any venture?

There is no need to tell a younger son of the period that he must not marry a pretty girl of doubtful family and no fortune. He may have his doubts on scores of subjects: he may not be quite sure whether he ought to remain a Whig with Lord Russell, or go in for Odgerism and the ballot; he may be uncertain about Colenso, and have his misgivings about the Pentateuch; he may not be easy in his mind about the Russians in the East, or the Americans in the West; uncomfortable suspicions may cross him that the Volunteers are not as quick in evolution as the Zouaves, or that England generally does not sing 'Rule Britannia' so lustily as she used to do. All these are possible misgivings, but that he should take such a plunge as matrimony, on other grounds than the perfect prudence and profit of the investment, could never occur to him.

As to the sinfulness of tampering with a girl's affections by what

in slang is called 'spooning,' it was purely absurd to think of it. You might as well say that playing sixpenny whist made a man a gambler. And then, as to the spooning, it was *partie égale*, the lady was no worse off than the gentleman. If there were by any hazard—and this he was disposed to doubt—'affections' at stake, the man 'stood to lose' as much as the woman. But this was not the aspect in which the case presented itself, flirtation being, in his idea, to marriage what the preliminary canter is to the race —something to indicate the future, but so dimly and doubtfully as not to decide the hesitation of the waverer.

If, then, Walpole was never for a moment what mothers call serious in his attentions to Mademoiselle Kostalergi, he was not the less fond of her society; he frequented the places where she was likely to be met with, and paid her that degree of 'court' that only stopped short of being particular by his natural caution. There was the more need for the exercise of this quality at Rome, since there were many there who knew of his engagement with his cousin, Lady Maude, and who would not have hesitated to report on any breach of fidelity. Now, however, all these restraints were withdrawn. They were not in Italy, where London, by a change of venue, takes its 'records' to be tried in the dull days of winter. They were in Ireland, and in a remote spot of Ireland, where there were no gossips, no clubs, no afternoon-tea committees, to sit on reputations, and was it not pleasant now to see this nice girl again in perfect freedom? These were, loosely stated, the thoughts which occupied him as he went along, very little disposed to mind how often the puzzled driver halted to decide the road, or how frequently he retraced miles of distance. Men of the world, especially when young in life, and more realistic than they will be twenty years later, proud of the incredulity they can feel on the score of everything and everybody, are often fond of making themselves heroes to their own hearts of some little romance, which shall not cost them dearly to indulge in, and merely engage some loose-lying sympathies without in any way prejudicing their road in life. They accept of these sentimentalities as the vicar's wife did the sheep in the picture, pleased to 'have as many as the painter would put in for nothing.'

Now, Cecil Walpole never intended that this little Irish episode —and episode he determined it should be—should in any degree affect the serious fortunes of his life. He was engaged to his cousin, Lady Maude Bickerstaffe, and they would be married some day. Not that either was very impatient to exchange present comfort—and, on her side, affluence—for a marriage on small means, and no great prospects beyond that. They were not much

in love. Walpole knew that the Lady Maude's fortune was small, but the man who married her must 'be taken care of,' and by either side, for there were as many Tories as Whigs in the family, and Lady Maude knew that half a dozen years ago, she would certainly not have accepted Walpole; but that with every year her chances of a better *parti* were diminishing; and, worse than all this, each was well aware of the inducements by which the other was influenced. Nor did the knowledge in any way detract from their self-complacence or satisfaction with the match.

Lady Maude was to accompany her uncle to Ireland, and do the honours of his court, for he was a bachelor, and pleaded hard with his party on that score to be let off accepting the viceroyalty.

Lady Maude, however, had not yet arrived, and even if she had, how should she ever hear of an adventure in the Bog of Allen!

But was there to be an adventure? and, if so, what sort of adventure? Irishmen, Walpole had heard, had all the jealousy about their women that characterises savage races, and were ready to resent what, in civilised people, no one would dream of regarding as matter for umbrage. Well, then, it was only to be more cautious—more on one's guard—besides the tact, too, which a knowledge of life should give——

'Eh, what's this? Why are you stopping here?'

This was addressed now to the driver, who had descended from his box, and was standing in advance of the horse.

'Why don't I drive on, is it?' asked he, in a voice of despair. 'Sure, there's no road.'

'And does it stop here?' cried Walpole in horror, for he now perceived that the road really came to an abrupt ending in the midst of the bog.

'Begorra, it's just what it does. Ye see, your honour,' added he, in a confidential tone, 'it's one of them tricks the English played us in the year of the famine. They got two millions of money to make roads in Ireland, but they were so afraid it would make us prosperous and richer than themselves, that they set about making roads that go nowhere. Sometimes to the top of a mountain, or down to the sea, where there was no harbour, and sometimes, like this one, into the heart of a bog.'

'That was very spiteful and very mean, too,' said Walpole.

'Wasn't it just mean, and nothing else! and it's five miles we'll have to go back now to the cross-roads. Begorra, your honour, it's a good dhrink ye'll have to give me for this day's work.'

'You forget, my friend, that but for your own confounded stupidity, I should have been at Kilgobbin Castle by this time.'

'And ye'll be there yet, with God's help!' said he, turning the horse's head. 'Bad luck to them for the road-making, and it's a pity, after all, it goes nowhere, for it's the nicest bit to travel in the whole country.'

'Come now, jump up, old fellow, and make your beast step out. I don't want to pass the night here.'

'You wouldn't have a dhrop of whisky with your honour?'

'Of course not.'

'Nor even brandy?'

'No, not even brandy.'

'Musha, I'm thinking you must be English,' muttered he, half sulkily.

'And if I were, is there any great harm in that?'

'By coorse not; how could ye help it? I suppose we'd all of us be better if we could. Sit a bit more forward, your honour; the bellyband does be lifting her, and as you're doing nothing, just give her a welt of that stick in your hand, now and then, for I lost the lash off my whip, and I've nothing but this!' And he displayed the short handle of what had once been a whip, with a thong of leather dangling at the end.

'I must say I wasn't aware that I was to have worked my passage,' said Walpole, with something between drollery and irritation.

'She doesn't care for bating—stick her with the end of it. That's the way. We'll get on elegant now. I suppose you was never here before?'

'No; and I think I can promise you I'll not come again.'

'I hope you will, then, and many a time too. This is the Bog of Allen you're travelling now, and they tell there's not the like of it in the three kingdoms.'

'I trust there's not!'

'The English, they say, has no bogs. Nothing but coal.'

'Quite true.'

'Erin, *ma bouchal* you are! first gem of the say! that's what Dan O'Connell always called you. Are you gettin' tired with the stick?'

'I'm tired of your wretched old beast, and your car, and yourself, too,' said Walpole; 'and if I were sure that was the castle yonder, I'd make my way straight to it on foot.'

'And why wouldn't you, if your honour liked it best? Why would ye be beholden to a car if you'd rather walk. Only mind the bog-holes: for there's twenty feet of water in some of them, and the sides is so straight, you'll never get out if you fall in.'

'Drive on, then. I'll remain where I am; but don't bother me with your talk; and no more questioning.'

'By coorse I won't—why would I? Isn't your honour a gentleman, and haven't you a right to say what you plaze; and what am I but a poor boy, earning his bread. Just the way it is all through the world; some has everything they want and more besides, and others hasn't a stitch to their backs, or maybe a pinch of tobacco to put in a pipe.'

This appeal was timed by seeing that Walpole had just lighted a fresh cigar, whose fragrant fumes were wafted across the speaker's nose.

Firm to his determination to maintain silence, Walpole paid no attention to the speech, nor uttered a word of any kind; and as a light drizzling rain had now begun to fall, and obliged him to shelter himself under an umbrella, he was at length saved from his companion's loquacity. Baffled, but not beaten, the old fellow began to sing, at first in a low, droning tone; but growing louder as the fire of patriotism warmed him, he shouted, to a very wild and somewhat irregular tune, a ballad, of which Walpole could not but hear the words occasionally, while the tramping of the fellow's feet on the foot-board kept time to his song:—

'Tis our fun they can't forgive us,
Nor our wit so sharp and keen;
But there's nothing that provokes them
Like our wearin' of the green.
They thought poverty would bate us,
But we'd sell our last "boneen,"
And we'll live on cowld paytatees,
All for wearin' of the green.
Oh, the wearin' of the green—the wearin' of the green!
'Tis the colour best becomes us
Is the wearin' of the green!'

'Here's a cigar for you, old fellow, and stop that infernal chant.'

'There's only five verses more, and I'll sing them for your honour before I light the baccy.'

'If you do, then, you shall never light baccy of mine. Can't you see that your confounded song is driving me mad?'

'Faix, ye're the first I ever see disliked music,' muttered he, in a tone almost compassionate.

And now as Walpole raised the collar of his coat to defend his ears, and prepared, as well as he might, to resist the weather, he muttered, 'And this is the beautiful land of scenery; and this the climate; and this the amusing and witty peasant we read of. I have half a mind to tell the world how it has been humbugged!'

And thus musing, he jogged on the weary road, nor raised his head till the heavy clash of an iron gate aroused him, and he saw that they were driving along an approach, with some clumps of pretty but young timber on either side.

'Here we are, your honour, safe and sound,' cried the driver, as proudly as if he had not been five hours over what should have been done in one and a half. 'This is Kilgobbin. All the ould trees was cut down by Oliver Cromwell, they say, but there will be a fine wood here yet. That 's the castle you see yonder, over them trees; but there 's no flag flying. The lord 's away. I suppose I 'll have to wait for your honour? You 'll be coming back with me?'

'Yes, you 'll have to wait.' And Walpole looked at his watch and saw it was already past five o'clock.

CHAPTER X

THE SEARCH FOR ARMS

When the hour of luncheon came, and no guests made their appearance, the young girls at the castle began to discuss what they should best do. 'I know nothing of fine people and their ways,' said Kate—'you must take the whole direction here, Nina.'

'It is only a question of time, and a cold luncheon can wait without difficulty.'

And so they waited till three, then till four, and now it was five o'clock; when Kate, who had been over the kitchen-garden, and the calves' paddock, and inspecting a small tract laid out for a nursery, came back to the house very tired, and, as she said, also very hungry. 'You know, Nina,' said she, entering the room, 'I ordered no dinner to-day. I speculated on our making our dinner when your friends lunched; and as they have not lunched, we have not dined; and I vote we sit down now. I 'm afraid I shall not be as pleasant company as that Mr.—do tell me his name—Walpole—but I pledge myself to have as good an appetite.'

Nina made no answer. She stood at the open window; her gaze steadily bent on the strip of narrow road that traversed the wide moor before her.

'Ain't you hungry? I mean, ain't you famished, child?' asked Kate.

'No, I don't think so. I could eat, but I believe I could go without eating just as well.'

'Well, I must dine; and if you were not looking so nice and fresh, with a rose-bud in your hair and your white dress so daintily looped up, I'd ask leave not to dress.'

'If you were to smooth your hair, and, perhaps, change your boots——'

'Oh, I know, and become in every respect a little civilised. My poor dear cousin, what a mission you have undertaken among the savages. Own it honestly, you never guessed the task that was before you when you came here.'

'Oh, it's very nice savagery, all the same,' said the other, smiling pleasantly.

'There now!' cried Kate, as she threw her hat to one side, and stood arranging her hair before the glass. 'I make this toilet under protest, for we are going in to luncheon, not dinner, and all the world knows, and all the illustrated newspapers show, that people do not dress for lunch. And, by the way, that is something you have not got in Italy. All the women gathering together in their garden-bonnets and their morning-muslins, and the men in their knickerbockers and their coarse tweed coats.'

'I declare I think you are in better spirits since you see these people are not comng.'

'It is true. You have guessed it, dearest. The thought of anything grand—as a visitor;—anything that would for a moment suggest the unpleasant question, Is this right? or, Is that usual? makes me downright irritable. Come, are you ready? May I offer you my arm?'

And now they were at table, Kate rattling away in unwonted gaiety, and trying to rally Nina out of her disappointment.

'I declare Nina, everything is so pretty I am ashamed to eat. Those chickens near you are the least ornamental things I see. Cut me off a wing. Oh, I forgot, you never acquired the barbarous art of carving.'

'I can cut this,' said Nina, drawing a dish or tongue towards her.

'What! that marvellous production like a parterre of flowers? It would be downright profanation to destroy it.'

'Then shall I give you some of this, Kate?'

'Why, child, that is strawberry-cream. But I cannot eat all alone; do help yourself.'

'I shall take something by and by.'

'What do young ladies in Italy eat when they are—no, I don't mean in love—I shall call it—in despair?'

'Give me some of that white wine beside you. There! don't you hear a noise? I'm certain I heard the sound of wheels.'

'Most sincerely I trust not. I wouldn't for anything these people should break in upon us now. If my brother Dick should drop in I'd welcome him, and he would make our little party perfect. Do you know, Nina, Dick can be so jolly. What's that? there are voices there without.'

As she spoke the door was opened, and Walpole entered. The young girls had but time to rise from their seats, when—they never could exactly say how—they found themselves shaking hands with him in great cordiality.

'And your friend—where is he?'

'Nursing a sore throat, or a sprained ankle, or a something or other. Shall I confess it—as only a suspicion on my part, however—that I do believe he was too much shocked at the outrageous liberty I took in asking to be admitted here to accept any partnership in the impertinence?'

'We expected you at two or three o'clock,' said Nina.

'And shall I tell you why I was not here before? Perhaps you'll scarcely credit me when I say I have been five hours on the road.'

'Five hours! How did you manage that?'

'In this way. I started a few minutes after twelve from the inn—I on foot, the car to overtake me.' And he went on to give a narrative of his wanderings over the bog, imitating, as well as he could, the driver's conversations with him, and the reproaches he vented on his inattention to the road. Kate enjoyed the story with all the humoristic fun of one who knew thoroughly how the peasant had been playing with the gentleman, just for the indulgence of that strange, sarcastic temper that underlies the Irish nature; and she could fancy how much more droll it would have been to have heard the narrative as told by the driver of the car.

'And don't you like his song, Mr. Walpole?'

'What, "The Wearing of the Green"? It was the dreariest dirge I ever listened to.'

'Come, you shall not say so. When we go into the drawing-room, Nina shall sing it for you, and I'll wager you recant your opinion.'

'And do you sing rebel canticles, Mademoiselle Kostalergi?'

'Yes, I do all my cousin bids me. I wear a red cloak. How is it called?'

'Connemara?'

Nina nodded.

'That's the name, but I'm not going to say it; and when we go abroad—that is, on the bog there, for a walk—we dress in green petticoats and wear very thick shoes.'

'And, in a word, are very generally barbarous.'

'Well, if you be really barbarians,' said Walpole, filling his glass, 'I wonder what I would not give to be allowed to join the tribe.'

'Oh, you'd want to be a sachem, or a chief, or a mystery-man at least; and we couldn't permit that,' cried Kate.

'No; I crave admission as the humblest of your followers.'

'Shall we put him to the test, Nina?'

'How do you mean?' cried the other.

'Make him take a Ribbon oath, or the pledge of a United Irishman. I've copies of both in papa's study.'

'I should like to see these immensely,' said Walpole.

'I'll see if I can't find them,' cried Kate, rising and hastening away.

For some seconds after she left the room there was perfect silence. Walpole tried to catch Nina's eye before he spoke, but she continued steadily to look down, and did not once raise her lids.

'Is she not very nice—is she not very beautiful?' asked she, in a low voice.

'It is of *you* I want to speak.'

And he drew his chair closer to her, and tried to take her hand, but she withdrew it quickly, and moved slightly away.

'If you knew the delight it is to me to see you again, Nina—well, Mademoiselle Kostalergi. Must it be Mademoiselle?'

'I don't remember it was ever "Nina,"' said she coldly.

'Perhaps only in my thoughts. To my heart, I can swear, you were Nina. But tell me how you came here, and when, and for how long, for I want to know all. Speak to me, I beseech you. She'll be back in a moment, and when shall I have another instant alone with you like this? Tell me how you came amongst them, and are they really all rebels?'

Kate entered at the instant, saying, 'I can't find it, but I'll have a good search to-morrow, for I know it's there.'

'Do, by all means, Kate, for Mr. Walpole is very anxious to learn if he be admitted legitimately into this brotherhood—whatever it be; he has just asked me if we were really all rebels here.'

'I trust he does not suppose I would deceive him,' said Kate gravely. 'And when he hears you sing "The blackened hearth—the fallen roof," he'll not question *you*, Nina.—Do you know that song, Mr. Walpole?'

He smiled as he said 'No.'

'Won't it be so nice,' said she, 'to catch a fresh ingenuous Saxon wandering innocently over the Bog of Allen, and send him back to his friends a Fenian!'

'Make me what you please, but don't send me away.'

'Tell me, really, what would you do if we made you take the oath?'

'Betray you, of course, the moment I got up to Dublin.'

Nina's eyes flashed angrily, as though such jesting was an offence.

'No, no, the shame of such treason would be intolerable; but you'd go your way and behave as though you never saw us.'

'Oh, he could do that without the inducement of a perjury,' said Nina, in Italian; and then added aloud, 'Let's go and make some music. Mr. Walpole sings charmingly, Kate, and is very obliging about it—at least he used to be.'

'I am all that I used to be—towards that,' whispered he, as she passed him to take Kate's arm and walk away.

'You don't seem to have a thick neighbourhood about you,' said Walpole. 'Have you any people living near?'

'Yes, we have a dear old friend—a Miss O'Shea, a maiden lady, who lives a few miles off. By the way, there's something to show you—an old maid who hunts her own harriers.'

'What! are you in earnest?'

'On my word, it is true! Nina can't endure her; but Nina doesn't care for hare-hunting, and, I'm afraid to say, never saw a badger drawn in her life.'

'And have you?' asked he, almost with horror in his tone.

'I'll show you three regular little turnspit dogs to-morrow that will answer that question.'

'How I wish Lockwood had come out here with me,' said Walpole, almost uttering a thought.

'That is, you wish he had seen a bit of barbarous Ireland he'd scarcely credit from mere description. But perhaps I'd have been better behaved before him. I'm treating you with all the freedom of an old friend of my cousin's.'

Nina had meanwhile opened the piano, and was letting her hands stray over the instrument in occasional chords; and then in a low voice, that barely blended its tones with the accompaniment, she sang one of those little popular songs of Italy, called 'Stornelli'—wild, fanciful melodies, with that blended gaiety and sadness which the songs of a people are so often marked by.

'That is a very old favourite of mine,' said Walpole, approaching the piano as noiselessly as though he feared to disturb the

'How that song makes me wish we were back again where I heard it first.'

singer; and now he stole into a chair at her side. 'How that song makes me wish we were back again, where I heard it first,' whispered he gently.

'I forget where that was,' said she carelessly.

'No, Nina, you do not,' said he eagerly; 'it was at Albano, the day we all went to Pallavicini's villa.'

'And I sang a little French song, "*Si vous n'avez rien à me dire,*" which you were vain enough to imagine was a question addressed to yourself; and you made me a sort of declaration; do you remember all that?'

'Every word of it.'

'Why don't you go and speak to my cousin; she has opened the window and gone out upon the terrace, and I trust you understand that she expects you to follow her.' There was a studied calm in the way she spoke that showed she was exerting considerable self-control.

'No, no, Nina, it is with you I desire to speak; to see you that I have come here.'

'And so you do remember that you made me a declaration? It made me laugh afterwards as I thought it over.'

'Made you laugh!'

'Yes, I laughed to myself at the ingenious way in which you conveyed to me what an imprudence it was in you to fall in love with a girl who had no fortune, and the shock it would give your friends when they should hear she was a Greek.'

'How can you say such painful things, Nina? how can you be so pitiless as this?'

'It was you who had no pity, sir; I felt a deal of pity; I will not deny it was for myself. I don't pretend to say that I could give a correct version of the way in which you conveyed to me the pain it gave you that I was not a princess, a Borromeo, or a Colonna, or an Altieri. That Greek adventurer, yes—you cannot deny it, I overheard these words myself. You were talking to an English girl, a tall, rather handsome person she was—I shall remember her name in a moment if you cannot help me to it sooner—a Lady Bickerstaffe——'

'Yes, there was a Lady Maude Bickerstaffe; she merely passed through Rome for Naples.'

'You called her a cousin, I remember.'

'There is some cousinship between us; I forget exactly in what degree.'

'Do try and remember a little more; remember that you forgot you had engaged me for the cotillon, and drove away with that blonde beauty—and she was a beauty, or had been a few

years before—at all events, you lost all memory of the daughter of the adventurer.'

'You will drive me distracted, Nina, if you say such things.'

'I know it is wrong and it is cruel, and it is worse than wrong and cruel, it is what you English call underbred, to be so individually disagreeable, but this grievance of mine has been weighing very heavily on my heart, and I have been longing to tell you so.'

'Why are you not singing, Nina?' cried Kate from the terrace. 'You told me of a duet, and I think you are bent on having it without music.'

'Yes, we are quarrelling fiercely,' said Nina. 'This gentleman has been rash enough to remind me of an unsettled score between us, and as he is the defaulter——'

'I dispute the debt.'

'Shall I be the judge between you?' asked Kate.

'On no account; my claim once disputed, I surrender it,' said Nina.

'I must say you are very charming company. You won't sing, and you'll only talk to say disagreeable things. Shall I make tea, and see if it will render you more amiable?'

'Do so, dearest, and then show Mr. Walpole the house; he has forgotten what brought him here, I really believe.'

'You know that I have not,' muttered he, in a tone of deep meaning.

'There's no light now to show him the house; Mr. Walpole must come to-morrow, when papa will be at home and delighted to see him.'

'May I really do this?'

'Perhaps, besides, your friend will have found the little inn so insupportable, that he too will join us. Listen to that sigh of poor Nina's and you'll understand what it is to be dreary!'

'No; I want my tea.'

'And it shall have it,' said Kate, kissing her with a petting affectation as she left the room.

'Now one word, only one,' said Walpole, as he drew his chair close to her: 'If I swear to you——'

'What's that? who is Kate angry with?' cried Nina, rising and rushing towards the door. 'What has happened?'

'I'll tell you what has happened,' said Kate, as with flashing eyes and heightened colour she entered the room. 'The large gate of the outer yard, that is every night locked and strongly barred at sunset, has been left open, and they tell me that three

men have come in, Sally says five, and are hiding in some of the outhouses.'

'What for? Is it to rob, think you?' asked Walpole.

'It is certainly for nothing good. They all know that papa is away, and the house so far unprotected,' continued Kate calmly. 'We must find out to-morrow who has left the gate unbolted. This was no accident, and now that they are setting fire to the ricks all round us, it is no time for carelessness.'

'Shall we search the offices and the outbuildings?' asked Walpole.

'Of course not; we must stand by the house and take care that they do not enter it. It's a strong old place, and even if they forced an entrance below, they couldn't set fire to it.'

'Could they force their way up?' asked Walpole.

'Not if the people above have any courage. Just come and look at the stair; it was made in times when people thought of defending themselves.' They issued forth now together to the top of the landing, where a narrow, steep flight of stone steps descended between two walls to the basement-story. A little more than half-way down was a low iron gate or grille of considerable strength; though, not being above four feet in height, it could have been no great defence, which seemed, after all, to have been its intention. 'When this is closed,' said Kate, shutting it with a heavy bang, 'it's not such easy work to pass up against two or three resolute people at the top; and see here,' added she, showing a deep niche or alcove in the wall, 'this was evidently meant for the sentry who watched the wicket: he could stand here out of the reach of all fire.'

'Would you not say she was longing for a conflict?' said Nina, gazing at her.

'No, but if it comes I'll not decline it.'

'You mean you'll defend the stair?' asked Walpole.

She nodded assent.

'What arms have you?'

'Plenty; come and look at them. Here,' said she, entering the dining-room, and pointing to a large oak sideboard covered with weapons, 'Here is probably what has led these people here. They are going through the country latterly on every side, in search of arms. I believe this is almost the only house where they have not called.'

'And do they go away quietly when their demands are complied with?'

'Yes, when they chance upon people of poor courage, they leave them with life enough to tell the story.—What is it,

Mathew?' asked she of the old serving-man who entered the room.

'It 's the "boys," miss, and they want to talk to you, if you 'll step out on the terrace. They don't mean any harm at all.'

'What do they want, then?'

'Just a spare gun or two, miss, or an ould pistol, or a thing of the kind that was no use.'

'Was it not brave of them to come here, when my father was from home? Aren't they fine courageous creatures to come and frighten two lone girls—eh, Mat?'

'Don't anger them, miss, for the love of Joseph! don't say anything hard; let me hand them that old carbine there, and the fowling-piece; and if you 'd give them a pair of horse-pistols, I 'm sure they 'd go away quiet.'

A loud noise of knocking, as though with a stone, at the outer door, broke in upon the colloquy, and Kate passed into the drawing-room, and opened the window, out upon the stone terrace which overlooked the yard: 'Who is there?—who are you?—what do you want?' cried she, peering down into the darkness, which, in the shadow of the house, was deeper.

'We 've come for arms,' cried a deep hoarse voice.

'My father is away from home—come and ask for them when he 's here to answer you.'

A wild, insolent laugh from below acknowledged what they thought of this speech.

'Maybe that was the rayson we came now, miss,' said a voice, in a lighter tone.

'Fine courageous fellows you are to say so! I hope Ireland has more of such brave patriotic men.'

'You 'd better leave that, anyhow,' said another, and as he spoke he levelled and fired, but evidently with intention to terrify rather than wound, for the plaster came tumbling down from several feet above her head; and now the knocking at the door was redoubled, and with a noise that resounded through the house.

'Wouldn't you advise her to give up the arms and let them go?' said Nina, in a whisper to Walpole; but though she was deadly pale there was no tremor in her voice.

'The door is giving way, the wood is completely rotten. Now for the stairs. Mr. Walpole, you 're going to stand by me?'

'I should think so, but I 'd rather you 'd remain here. I know my ground now.'

'No, I must be beside you. You 'll have to keep a rolling fire, and I can load quicker than most people. Come along now, we must take no light with us—follow me.'

'Take care,' said Nina to Walpole as he passed, but with an accent so full of a strange significance it dwelt on his memory long after.

'What was it Nina whispered you as you came by?' said Kate.

'Something about being cautious, I think,' said he carelessly.

'Stay where you are, Mathew,' said the girl, in a severe tone, to the old servant, who was officiously pressing forward with a light.

'Go back!' cried she, as he persisted in following her.

'That's the worst of all our troubles here, Mr. Walpole,' said she boldly; 'you cannot depend on the people of your own household. The very people you have nursed in sickness, if they only belong to some secret association, will betray you!' She made no secret of her words, but spoke them loud enough to be heard by the group of servants now gathered on the landing. Noiseless she tripped down the stairs, and passed into the little dark alcove, followed by Walpole, carrying any amount of guns and carbines under his arm.

'These are loaded, I presume?' said he.

'All, and ready capped. The short carbine is charged with a sort of canister shot, and keep it for a short range—if they try to pass over the iron gate. Now mind me, and I will give you the directions I heard my father give on this spot once before. Don't fire till they reach the foot of the stair.'

'I cannot hear you,' said he, for the din beneath, where they battered at the door, was now deafening.

'They'll be in in another moment—there, the lock has fallen off—the door has given way,' whispered she; 'be steady now, no hurry—steady and calm.'

As she spoke, the heavy oak door fell to the ground, and a perfect silence succeeded to the late din. After an instant, muttering whispers could be heard, and it seemed as if they doubted how far it was safe to enter, for all was dark within. Something was said in a tone of command, and at the moment one of the party flung forward a bundle of lighted straw and tow, which fell at the foot of the stairs, and for a few seconds lit up the place with a red lurid gleam, showing the steep stair and the iron bars of the little gate that crossed it.

'There's the iron wicket they spoke of,' cried one. 'All right, come on!' And the speaker led the way, cautiously, however, and slowly, the others after him.

'No, not yet,' whispered Kate, as she pressed her hand upon Walpole's.

'I hear voices up there,' cried the leader from below. 'We'll make them leave that, anyhow.' And he fired off his gun in the direction of the upper part of the stair; a quantity of plaster came clattering down as the ball struck the ceiling.

'Now,' said she. 'Now, and fire low!'

He discharged both barrels so rapidly that the two detonations blended into one, and the assailants replied by a volley, the echoing din almost sounding like artillery. Fast as Walpole could fire, the girl replaced the piece by another; when suddenly she cried, 'There is a fellow at the gate—the carbine—the carbine now, and steady.' A heavy crash and a cry followed his discharge, and snatching the weapon from him, she reloaded and handed it back with lightning speed. 'There is another there,' whispered she; and Walpole moved farther out, to take a steadier aim. All was still, not a sound to be heard for some seconds, when the hinges of the gate creaked and the bolt shook in the lock. Walpole fired again, but as he did so, the others poured in a rattling volley, one shot grazing his cheek, and another smashing both bones of his right arm, so that the carbine fell powerless from his hand. The intrepid girl sprang to his side at once, and then passing in front of him, she fired some shots from a revolver in quick succession. A low, confused sound of feet and a scuffling noise followed, when a rough, hoarse voice cried out, 'Stop firing; we are wounded, and going away.'

'Are you badly hurt?' whispered Kate to Walpole.

'Nothing serious: be still and listen!'

'There, the carbine is ready again. Oh, you cannot hold it—leave it to me,' said she.

From the difficulty of removal, it seemed as though one of the party beneath was either killed or badly wounded, for it was several minutes before they could gain the outer door.

'Are they really retiring?' whispered Walpole.

'Yes; they seem to have suffered heavily.'

'Would you not give them one shot at parting—that carbine is charged?' asked he anxiously.

'Not for worlds,' said she; 'savage as they are, it would be ruin to break faith with them.'

'Give me a pistol, my left hand is all right.' Though he tried to speak with calmness, the agony of pain he was suffering so overcame him that he leaned his head down, and rested it on her shoulder.

'My poor, poor fellow,' said she tenderly, 'I would not for the world that this had happened.'

'They 're gone, Miss Kate, they 've passed out at the big gate,

and they're off,' whispered old Mathew, as he stood trembling behind her.

'Here, call some one, and help this gentleman up the stairs, and get a mattress down on the floor at once; send off a messenger, Sally, for Doctor Tobin. He can take the car that came this evening, and let him make what haste he can.'

'Is he wounded?' said Nina, as they laid him down on the floor. Walpole tried to smile and say something, but no sound came forth.

'My own dear, dear Cecil,' whispered Nina, as she knelt and kissed his hand, 'tell me it is not dangerous.' He had fainted.

CHAPTER XI

WHAT THE PAPERS SAID OF IT

The wounded man had just fallen into a first sleep after his disaster, when the press of the capital was already proclaiming throughout the land the attack and search for arms at Kilgobbin Castle. In the National papers a very few lines were devoted to the event; indeed, their tone was one of party sneer at the importance given by their contemporaries to a very ordinary incident. 'Is there,' asked the *Convicted Felon*, 'anything very strange or new in the fact that Irishmen have determined to be armed? Is English legislation in this country so marked by justice, clemency, and generosity that the people of Ireland prefer to submit their lives and fortunes to its sway, to trusting what brave men alone trust in—their fearlessness and their daring? What is there, then, so remarkable in the repairing to Mr. Kearney's house for a loan of those weapons of which his family for several generations have forgotten the use?' In the Government journals the story of the attack was headed, 'Attack on Kilgobbin Castle. Heroic resistance by a young lady'; in which Kate Kearney's conduct was described in colours of extravagant eulogy. She was alternately Joan of Arc and the Maid of Saragossa, and it was gravely discussed whether any and what honours of the Crown were at Her Majesty's disposal to reward such brilliant heroism. In another print of the same stamp the narrative began: 'The disastrous condition of our country is never displayed in darker colours than when the totally unprovoked character of some outrage has to be recorded by the press. It is our melancholy task to present such a case as this to our

readers to-day. If it was our wish to exhibit to a stranger the picture of an Irish estate in which all the blessings of good management, intelligence, kindliness, and Christian charity were displayed; to show him a property where the wellbeing of landlord and tenant were inextricably united, where the condition of the people, their dress, their homes, their food, and their daily comforts, could stand comparison with the most favoured English county, we should point to the Kearney estate of Kilgobbin; and yet it is here, in the very house where his ancestors have resided for generations, that a most savage and dastardly attack is made; and if we feel a sense of shame in recording the outrage, we are recompensed by the proud elation with which we can recount the repulse—the noble and gallant achievement of an Irish girl. History has the record of more momentous feats, but we doubt that there is one in the annals of any land in which a higher heroism was displayed than in this splendid defence by Miss Kearney.' Then followed the story; not one of the papers having any knowledge of Walpole's presence on the occasion, or the slightest suspicion that she was aided in any way.

Joe Atlee was busily engaged in conning over and comparing these somewhat contradictory reports, as he sat at his breakfast, his chum Kearney being still in bed and asleep after a late night at a ball. At last there came a telegraphic despatch for Kearney; armed with which, Joe entered the bedroom and woke him.

'Here's something for you, Dick,' cried he. 'Are you too sleepy to read it?'

'Tear it open and see what it is, like a good fellow,' said the other indolently.

'It's from your sister—at least, it is signed Kate. It says: "There is no cause for alarm. All is going on well, and papa will be back this evening. I write by this post."'

'What does all that mean?' cried Dick, in surprise.

'The whole story is in the papers. The boys have taken the opportunity of your father's absence from home to make a demand for arms at your house, and your sister, it seems, showed fight and beat them off. They talk of two fellows being seen badly wounded, but, of course, that part of the story cannot be relied on. That they got enough to make them beat a retreat is, however, certain; and as they were what is called a strong party, the feat of resisting them is no small glory for a young lady.'

'It was just what Kate was certain to do. There's no man with a braver heart.'

'I wonder how the beautiful Greek behaved? I should like

greatly to hear what part she took in the defence of the citadel. Was she fainting or in hysterics, or so overcome by terror as to be unconscious?'

'I'll make you any wager you like, Kate did the whole thing herself. There was a Whiteboy attack to force the stairs when she was a child, and I suppose we rehearsed that combat fully fifty—ay, five hundred times. Kate always took the defence, and though we were sometimes four to one, she kept us back.'

'By Jove! I think I should be afraid of such a young lady.'

'So you would. She has more pluck in her heart than half that blessed province you come from. That's the blood of the old stock you are often pleased to sneer at, and of which the present will be a lesson to teach you better.'

'May not the lovely Greek be descended from some ancient stock too? Who is to say what blood of Pericles she has not in her veins? I tell you I'll not give up the notion that she was a sharer in this glory.'

'If you've got the papers with the account, let me see them, Joe. I've half a mind to run down by the night-mail—that is, if I can. Have you got any tin, Atlee?'

'There were some shillings in one of my pockets last night. How much do you want?'

'Eighteen-and-six first class, and a few shillings for a cab.'

'I can manage that; but I'll go and fetch you the papers, there's time enough to talk of the journey.'

The newsman had just deposited the *Croppy* on the table as Joe returned to the breakfast-table, and the story of Kilgobbin headed the first column in large capitals. 'While our contemporaries,' it began, 'are recounting with more than their wonted eloquence the injuries inflicted on three poor labouring men, who, in their ignorance of the locality, had the temerity to ask for alms at Kilgobbin Castle yesterday evening, and were ignominiously driven away from the door by a young lady, whose benevolence was administered through a blunderbuss, we, who form no portion of the polite press, and have no pretension to mix in what are euphuistically called the "best circles" of this capital, would like to ask, for the information of those humble classes among which our readers are found, is it the custom for young ladies to await the absence of their fathers to entertain young gentlemen tourists? and is a reputation for even heroic courage not somewhat dearly purchased at the price of the companionship of the admittedly most profligate man of a vicious and corrupt society? The heroine who defended Kilgobbin can reply to our query.'

Joe Atlee read this paragraph three times over before he carried in the paper to Kearney.

'Here's an insolent paragraph, Dick,' he cried, as he threw the paper to him on the bed. 'Of course it's a thing cannot be noticed in any way, but it's not the less rascally for that.'

'You know the fellow who edits this paper, Joe?' said Kearney, trembling with passion.

'No; my friend is doing his bit of oakum at Kilmainham. They gave him thirteen months, and a fine that he'll never be able to pay; but what would you do if the fellow who wrote it were in the next room at this moment?'

'Thrash him within an inch of his life.'

'And, with the inch of life left him, he'd get strong again and write at you and all belonging to you every day of his existence. Don't you see that all this license is one of the prices of liberty? There's no guarding against excesses when you establish a rivalry. The doctors could tell you how many diseased lungs and aneurisms are made by training for a rowing match.'

'I'll go down by the mail to-night and see what has given the origin to this scandalous falsehood.'

'There's no harm in doing that, especially if you take me with you.'

'Why should I take you, or for what?'

'As guide, counsellor, and friend.'

'Bright thought, when all the money we can muster between us is only enough for one fare.'

'Doubtless, first class; but we could go third class, two of us for the same money. Do you imagine that Damon and Pythias would have been separated if it came even to travelling in a cow compartment?'

'I wish you could see that there are circumstances in life where the comic man is out of place.'

'I trust I shall never discover them; at least, so long as Fate treats me with "heavy tragedy."'

'I'm not exactly sure, either, whether they'd like to receive you just now at Kilgobbin.'

'Inhospitable thought! My heart assures me of a most cordial welcome.'

'And I should only stay a day or two at farthest.'

'Which would suit me to perfection. I must be back here by Tuesday if I had to walk the distance.'

'Not at all improbable, so far as I know of your resources.'

'What a churlish dog it is! Now had you, Master Dick, proposed to me that we should go down and pass a week at a certain

small thatched cottage on the banks of the Bann, where a Presbyterian minister with eight olive branches vegetates, discussing tough mutton and tougher theology on Sundays, and getting through the rest of the week with the parables and potatoes, I'd have said, Done!'

'It was the inopportune time I was thinking of. Who knows what confusion this event may not have thrown them into? If you like to risk the discomfort, I make no objection.'

'To so heartily expressed an invitation there can be but one answer, I yield.'

'Now look here, Joe, I'd better be frank with you: don't try it on at Kilgobbin as you do with me.'

'You are afraid of my insinuating manners, are you?'

'I am afraid of your confounded impudence, and of that notion you cannot get rid of, that your cool familiarity is a fashionable tone.'

'How men mistake themselves. I pledge you my word, if I was asked what was the great blemish in my manner, I'd have said it was bashfulness.'

'Well, then, it is not!'

'Are you sure, Dick, are you quite sure?'

'I am quite sure, and unfortunately for you, you'll find that the majority agree with me.'

'"A wise man should guard himself against the defects that he might have, without knowing it." That is a Persian proverb, which you will find in *Hafiz*. I believe you never read *Hafiz*!'

'No, nor you either.'

'That's true; but I can make my own *Hafiz*, and just as good as the real article. By the way, are you aware that the water-carriers at Tehran sing *Lalla Rookh*, and believe it a national poem?'

'I don't know, and I don't care.'

'I'll bring down an *Anacreon* with me, and see if the Greek cousin can spell her way through an ode.'

'And I distinctly declare you shall do no such thing.'

'Oh dear, oh dear, what an unamiable trait is envy! By the way, was that your frock-coat I wore yesterday at the races?'

'I think you know it was; at least you remembered it when you tore the sleeve.'

'True, most true; that torn sleeve was the reason the rascal would only let me have fifteen shillings on it.'

'And you mean to say you pawned my coat?'

'I left it in the temporary care of a relative, Dick; but it is a redeemable mortgage, and don't fret about it.'

'Ever the same!'

'No, Dick, that means worse and worse! Now, I am in the process of reformation. The natural selection, however, where honesty is in the series, is a slow proceeding, and the organic changes are very complicated. As I know, however, you attach value to the effect you produce in that coat, I'll go and recover it. I shall not need Terence or Juvenal till we come back, and I'll leave them in the avuncular hands till then.'

'I wonder you're not ashamed of these miserable straits.'

'I am very much ashamed of the world that imposes them on me. I'm thoroughly ashamed of that public in lacquered leather, that sees me walking in broken boots. I'm heartily ashamed of that well-fed, well-dressed, sleek society, that never so much as asked whether the intellectual-looking man in the shabby hat, who looked so lovingly at the spiced beef in the window, had dined yet, or was he fasting for a wager?'

'There, don't carry away that newspaper; I want to read over that pleasant paragraph again!'

CHAPTER XII

THE JOURNEY TO THE COUNTRY

The two friends were deposited at the Moate station at a few minutes after midnight, and their available resources amounting to something short of two shillings, and the fare of a car and horse to Kilgobbin being more than three times that amount, they decided to devote their small balance to purposes of refreshment, and then set out for the castle on foot.

'It is a fine moonlight; I know all the short cuts, and I want a bit of walking besides,' said Kearney; and though Joe was of a self-indulgent temperament, and would like to have gone to bed after his supper and trusted to the chapter of accidents to reach Kilgobbin by a conveyance some time, any time, he had to yield his consent and set out on the road.

'The fellow who comes with the letter-bag will fetch over our portmanteau,' said Dick, as they started.

'I wish you'd give him directions to take charge of me, too,' said Joe, who felt very indisposed to a long walk.

'I like *you*,' said Dick sneeringly; 'you are always telling me that you are the sort of fellow for a new colony, life in the bush, and the rest of it, and when it comes to a question of a few

miles' tramp on a bright night in June, you try to skulk it in every possible way. You're a great humbug, Master Joe.'

'And you a very small humbug, and there lies the difference between us. The combinations in your mind are so few, that, as in a game of only three cards, there is no skill in the playing; while in my nature, as in that game called tarocco, there are half a dozen packs mixed up together, and the address required to play them is considerable.'

'You have a very satisfactory estimate of your own abilities, Joe.'

'And why not? If a clever fellow didn't know he was clever, the opinion of the world on his superiority would probably turn his brain.'

'And what do you say if his own vanity should do it?'

'There is really no way of explaining to a fellow like you——'

'What do you mean by a fellow like me?' broke in Dick, somewhat angrily.

'I mean this, that I'd as soon set to work to explain the theory of exchequer bonds to an Eskimo, as to make an unimaginative man understand something purely speculative. What you, and scores of fellows like you, denominate vanity, is only another form of hopefulness. You and your brethren—for you are a large family—do you know what it is to Hope! that is, you have no idea of what it is to build on the foundation of certain qualities you recognise in yourself, and to say that "if I can go so far with such a gift, such another will help me on so much farther."'

'I tell you one thing I do hope, which is, that the next time I set out a twelve miles' walk, I'll have a companion less imbued with self-admiration.'

'And you might and might not find him pleasanter company. Cannot you see, old fellow, that the very things you object to in me are what are wanting in you? they are, so to say, the complements of your own temperament.'

'Have you a cigar?'

'Two—take them both. I'd rather talk than smoke just now.'

'I am almost sorry for it, though it gives me the tobacco.'

'Are we on your father's property yet?'

'Yes; part of that village we came through belongs to us, and all this bog here is ours.'

'Why don't you reclaim it? labour costs a mere nothing in this country. Why don't you drain those tracts, and treat the soil with lime? I'd live on potatoes, I'd make my family live

on potatoes, and my son, and my grandson, for three generations, but I 'd win this land back to culture and productiveness.'

'The fee-simple of the soil wouldn't pay the cost. It would be cheaper to save the money and buy an estate.'

'That is one, and a very narrow view of it; but imagine the glory of restoring a lost tract to a nation, welcoming back the prodigal, and installing him in his place amongst his brethren. This was all forest once. Under the shade of the mighty oaks here those gallant O'Caharneys your ancestors followed the chase, or rested at noontide, or skedaddled in double-quick before those smart English of the Pale, who I must say treated your forbears with scant courtesy.'

'We held our own against them for many a year.'

'Only when it became so small it was not worth taking. Is not your father a Whig?'

'He 's a Liberal, but he troubles himself little about parties.'

'He 's a stout Catholic, though, isn't he?'

'He is a very devout believer in his Church,' said Dick with the tone of one who did not desire to continue the theme.

'Then why does he stop at Whiggery? why not go in for Nationalism and all the rest of it?'

'And what 's all the rest of it?'

'Great Ireland—no first flower of the earth or gem of the sea humbug—but Ireland great in prosperity, her harbours full of ships, the woollen trade, her ancient staple, revived: all that vast unused water-power, greater than all the steam of Manchester and Birmingham tenfold, at full work; the linen manufacture developed and promoted——'

'And the Union repealed?'

'Of course; that should be first of all. Not that I object to the Union, as many do, on the grounds of English ignorance as to Ireland. My dislike is, that, for the sake of carrying through certain measures necessary to Irish interests, I must sit and discuss questions which have no possible concern for me, and touch me no more than the debates in the Cortes, or the Reichskammer at Vienna. What do you or I care for who rules India, or who owns Turkey? What interest of mine is it whether Great Britain has five ironclads or fifty, or whether the Yankees take Canada, and the Russians Kabul '

'You 're a Fenian, and I am not.'

'I suppose you 'd call yourself an Englishman?'

'I am an English subject, and I owe my allegiance to England.'

'Perhaps for that matter, I owe some too; but I owe a great many things that I don't distress myself about paying.'

'Whatever your sentiments are on these matters—and, Joe, I am not disposed to think you have any very fixed ones—pray do me the favour to keep them to yourself while under my father's roof. I can almost promise you he'll obtrude none of his peculiar opinions on *you*, and I hope you will treat *him* with a like delicacy.'

'What will your folks talk, then? I can't suppose they care for books, art, or the drama. There is no society, so there can be no gossip. If that yonder be the cabin of one of your tenants, I'll certainly not start the question of farming.'

'There are poor on every estate,' said Dick curtly.

'Now what sort of a rent does that fellow pay—five pounds a year?'

'More likely five-and-twenty or thirty shillings.'

'By Jove, I'd like to set up house in that fashion, and make love to some delicately-nurtured miss, win her affections, and bring her home to such a spot. Wouldn't that be a touchstone of affection, Dick?'

'If I could believe you were in earnest, I'd throw you neck and heels into that bog-hole.'

'Oh, if you would!' cried he, and there was a ring of truthfulness in his voice now there could be no mistaking.

Half-ashamed of the emotion his idle speech had called up, and uncertain how best to treat the emergency, Kearney said nothing, and Atlee walked on for miles without a word.

'You can see the house now. It tops the trees yonder,' said Dick.

'That is Kilgobbin Castle, then?' said Joe slowly.

'There's not much of castle left about it. There is a square block of a tower, and you can trace the moat and some remains of outworks.'

'Shall I make you a confession, Dick? I envy you all that! I envy you what smacks of a race, a name, an ancestry, a lineage. It's a great thing to be able to "take up the running," as folks say, instead of making all the race yourself; and there's one inestimable advantage in it, it rescues you from all indecent haste about asserting your station. You feel yourself to be a somebody and you've not hurried to proclaim it. There now, my boy, if you'd have said only half as much as that on the score of your family, I'd have called you an arrant snob. So much for consistency.'

'What you have said gave me pleasure, I'll own that.'

'I suppose it was you planted those trees there. It was a nice thought, and makes the transition from the bleak bog to the

cultivated land more easy and graceful. Now I see the castle well. It's a fine portly mass against the morning sky, and I perceive you fly a flag over it.'

'When the lord is at home.'

'Ay, and by the way, do you give him his title while talking to him here?'

'The tenants do, and the neighbours and strangers do as they please about it.'

'Does he like it himself?'

'If I was to guess, I should perhaps say he does like it. Here we are now. Inside this low gate you are within the demesne, and I may bid you welcome to Kilgobbin. We shall build a lodge here one of these days. There's a good stretch, however, yet to the castle. We call it two miles, and it's not far short of it.'

'What a glorious morning. There is an ecstasy in scenting these nice fresh woods in the clear sunrise, and seeing those modest daffodils make their morning toilet.'

'That's a fancy of Kate's. There is a border of such wild flowers all the way to the house.'

'And those rills of clear water that flank the road, are they of her designing?'

'That they are. There was a cutting made for a railroad line about four miles from this, and they came upon a sort of pudding-stone formation, made up chiefly of white pebbles. Kate heard of it, purchased the whole mass, and had these channels paved with them from the gate to the castle, and that's the reason this water has its crystal clearness.'

'She's worthy of Shakespeare's sweet epithet, the "daintiest Kate in Christendom." Here's her health!' and he stooped down, and filling his palm with the running water, drank it off.

'I see it's not yet five o'clock. We'll steal quietly off to bed, and have three or four hours' sleep before we show ourselves.'

CHAPTER XIII

A SICK-ROOM

Cecil Walpole occupied the state-room and the state-bed at Kilgobbin Castle; but the pain of a very serious wound had left him very little faculty to know what honour was rendered him, or of what watchful solicitude he was the object. The fever brought on by his wound had obliterated in his mind all memory

of where he was; and it was only now—that is, on the same morning that the young men had arrived at the castle—that he was able to converse without much difficulty, and enjoy the companionship of Lockwood, who had come over to see him and scarcely quitted his bedside since the disaster.

'It seems going on all right,' said Lockwood, as he lifted the iced cloths to look at the smashed limb, which lay swollen and livid on a pillow outside the clothes.

'It 's not pretty to look at, Harry; but the doctor says "we shall save it"—his phrase for not cutting it off.'

'They 've taken up two fellows on suspicion, and I believe they were of the party here that night.'

'I don't much care about that. It was a fair fight, and I suspect I did not get the worst of it. What really does grieve me is to think how ingloriously one gets a wound that in real war would have been a title of honour.'

'If I had to give a V.C. for this affair, it would be to that fine girl I 'd give it, and not to you, Cecil.'

'So should I. There is no question whatever as to our respective shares in the achievement.'

'And she is so modest and unaffected about it all, and when she was showing me the position and the alcove, she never ceased to lay stress on the safety she enjoyed during the conflict.'

'Then she said nothing about standing in front of me after I was wounded?'

'Not a word. She said a great deal about your coolness and indifference to danger, but nothing about her own.'

'Well, I suppose it 's almost a shame to own it—not that I could have done anything to prevent it—but she did step down one step of the stair and actually cover me from fire.'

'She 's the finest girl in Europe,' said Lockwood warmly.

'And if it was not the contrast with her cousin, I 'd almost say one of the handsomest,' said Cecil.

'The Greek is splendid, I admit that, though she 'll not speak—she 'll scarcely notice me.'

'How is that?'

'I can't imagine, except it might have been an awkward speech I made when we were talking over the row. I said, "Where were you? what were you doing all this time?"'

'And what answer did she make you?'

'None; not a word. She drew herself proudly up, and opened her eyes so large and full upon me, that I felt I must have appeared some sort of monster to be so stared at.'

'I 've seen her do that.'

'It was very grand and very beautiful; but I'll be shot if I'd like to stand under it again. From that time to this she has never deigned me more than a mere salutation.'

'And are you good friends with the other girl?'

'The best in the world. I don't see much of her, for she's always abroad, over the farm, or among the tenants: but when we meet we are very cordial and friendly.'

'And the father, what is he like?'

'My lord is a glorious old fellow, full of hospitable plans and pleasant projects; but terribly distressed to think that this unlucky incident should prejudice you against Ireland. Indeed, he gave me to understand that there must have been some mistake or misconception in the matter, for the castle had never been attacked before; and he insists on saying that if you will stop here—I think he said ten years—you'll not see another such occurrence.'

'It's rather a hard way to test the problem though.'

'What's more, he included me in the experiment.'

'And this title? Does he assume it, or expect it to be recognised?'

'I can scarcely tell you. The Greek girl "my lords" him occasionally; his daughter, never. The servants always do so; and I take it that people use their own discretion about it.'

'Or do it in a sort of indolent courtesy, as they call Marsala, sherry, but take care at the same time to pass the decanter. I believe you telegraphed to his Excellency?'

'Yes; and he means to come over next week.'

'Any news of Lady Maude?'

'Only that she comes with him, and I'm sorry for it.'

'So am I—deuced sorry! In a gossiping town like Dublin there will be surely some story afloat about these handsome girls here. She saw the Greek, too, at the Duke of Rigati's ball at Rome, and she never forgets a name or a face. A pleasant trait in a wife.'

'Of course the best plan will be to get removed, and be safely installed in our old quarters at the Castle before they arrive.'

'We must hear what the doctor says.'

'He'll say no, naturally, for he'll not like to lose his patient. He will have to convey you to town, and we'll try and make him believe it will be the making of him. Don't you agree with me, Cecil, it's the thing to do?'

'I have not thought it over yet. I will to-day. By the way, I know it's the thing to do,' repeated he, with an air of determination. 'There will be all manner of reports, scandals,

and falsehoods to no end about this business here; and when Lady Maude learns, as she is sure to learn, that the "Greek girl" is in the story, I cannot measure the mischief that may come of it.'

'Break off the match, eh?'

'That is certainly "on the cards."'

'I suspect even that would not break your heart.'

'I don't say it would, but it would prove very inconvenient in many ways. Danesbury has great claims on his party. He came here as Viceroy dead against his will, and, depend upon it, he made his terms. Then if these people go out, and the Tories want to outbid them, Danesbury could take—ay, and would take —office under them.'

'I cannot follow all that. All I know is, I like the old boy himself, though he is a bit pompous now and then, and fancies he's Emperor of Russia.'

'I wish his niece didn't imagine she was an imperial princess.'

'That she does! I think she is the haughtiest girl I ever met. To be sure she was a great beauty.'

'*Was*, Harry! What do you mean by "was"? Lady Maude is not eight-and-twenty.'

'Ain't she, though? Will you have a ten-pound note on it that she's not over thirty-one; and I can tell you who could decide the wager?'

'A delicate thought!—a fellow betting on the age of the girl he's going to marry!'

'Ten o'clock!—nearly half-past ten!' said Lockwood, rising from his chair. 'I must go and have some breakfast. I meant to have been down in time to-day, and breakfasted with the old fellow and his daughter; for coming late brings me to a *tête-à-tête* with the Greek damsel, and it isn't jolly, I assure you.'

'Don't you speak?'

'Never a word! She's generally reading a newspaper when I go in. She lays it down; but after remarking that she fears I'll find the coffee cold, she goes on with her breakfast, kisses her Maltese terrier, asks him a few questions about his health, and whether he would like to be in a warmer climate, and then sails away.'

'And how she walks!'

'Is she bored here?'

'She says not.'

'She can scarcely like these people; they're not the sort of thing she has ever been used to.'

'She tells me she likes them: they certainly like her.'

'Well,' said Lockwood, with a sigh, 'she's the most beautiful

woman, certainly, I 've ever seen ; and, at this moment, I 'd rather eat a crust with a glass of beer under a hedge than I 'd go down and sit at breakfast with her.'

'I 'll be shot if I 'll not tell her that speech the first day I 'm down again.'

'So you may, for by that time I shall have seen her for the last time.' And with this he strolled out of the room and down the stairs towards the breakfast-parlour.

As he stood at the door he heard the sound of voices laughing and talking pleasantly. He entered, and Nina arose as he came forward, and said, 'Let me present my cousin—Mr. Richard Kearney, Major Lockwood ; his friend, Mr. Atlee.'

The two young men stood up—Kearney stiff and haughty, and Atlee with a sort of easy assurance that seemed to suit his good-looking but certainly snobbish style. As for Lockwood, he was too much a gentleman to have more than one manner, and he received these two men as he would have received any other two of any rank anywhere.

'These gentlemen have been showing me some strange versions of our little incident here in the Dublin papers,' said Nina to Lockwood. 'I scarcely thought we should become so famous.'

'I suppose they don't stickle much for truth,' said Lockwood, as he broke his egg in leisurely fashion.

'They were scarcely able to provide a special correspondent for the event,' said Atlee ; 'but I take it they give the main facts pretty accurately and fairly.'

'Indeed!' said Lockwood, more struck by the manner than by the words of the speaker. 'They mention, then, that my friend received a bad fracture of the forearm.'

'No, I don't think they do ; at least so far as I have seen. They speak of a night attack on Kilgobbin Castle, made by an armed party of six or seven men with faces blackened, and their complete repulse through the heroic conduct of a young lady.'

'The main facts, then, include no mention of poor Walpole and his misfortune?'

'I don't think that we mere Irish attach any great importance to a broken arm, whether it came of a cricket-ball or gun ; but we do interest ourselves deeply when an Irish girl displays feats of heroism and courage that men find it hard to rival.'

'It was very fine,' said Lockwood gravely.

'Fine! I should think it was fine!' burst out Atlee. 'It was so fine that, had the deed been done on the other side of this narrow sea, the nation would not have been satisfied till your Poet Laureate had commemorated it in verse.'

He entered, and Nina arose as he came forward.

'Have they discovered any traces of the fellows?' said Lockwood, who declined to follow the discussion into this channel.

'My father has gone over to Moate to-day,' said Kearney, now speaking for the first time, 'to hear the examination of two fellows who have been taken up on suspicion.'

'You have plenty of this sort of thing in your country,' said Atlee to Nina.

'Where do you mean when you say my country?'

'I mean Greece.'

'But I have not seen Greece since I was a child, so high; I have lived always in Italy.'

'Well, Italy has Calabria and the Terra del Lavoro.'

'And how much do we in Rome know about either?'

'About as much,' said Lockwood, 'as Belgravia does of the Bog of Allen.'

'You'll return to your friends in civilised life with almost the fame of an African traveller, Major Lockwood,' said Atlee pertly.

'If Africa can boast such hospitality, I certainly rather envy than compassionate Doctor Livingstone,' said he politely.

'Somebody,' said Kearney dryly, 'calls hospitality the breeding of the savage.'

'But I deny that we are savage,' cried Atlee. 'I contend for it that all our civilisation is higher, and that class for class we are in a more advanced culture than the English; that your chawbacon is not as intelligent a being as our bogtrotter; that your petty shopkeeper is inferior to ours; that throughout our middle classes there is not only a higher morality but a higher refinement than with you.'

'I read in one of the most accredited journals of England the other day that Ireland had never produced a poet, could not even show a second-rate humorist,' said Kearney.

'Swift and Sterne were third-rate, or perhaps, English,' said Atlee.

'These are themes I'll not attempt to discuss,' said Lockwood; 'but I know one thing, it takes three times as much military force to govern the smaller island.'

'That is to say, to govern the country after *your* fashion; but leave it to ourselves. Pack your portmanteaus and go away, and then see if we'll need this parade of horse, foot, and dragoons; these batteries of guns and these brigades of peelers.'

'You'd be the first to beg us to come back again.'

'Doubtless, as the Greeks are begging the Turks. Eh, mademoiselle; can you fancy throwing yourself at the feet of a Pasha and asking leave to be his slave?'

'The only Greek slave I ever heard of,' said Lockwood, 'was in marble and made by an American.'

'Come into the drawing-room and I'll sing you something,' said Nina, rising.

'Which will be far nicer and pleasanter than all this discussion,' said Joe.

'And if you'll permit me,' said Lockwood, 'we'll leave the drawing-room door open and let poor Walpole hear the music.'

'Would it not be better first to see if he's asleep?' said she.

'That's true. I'll step up and see.'

Lockwood hurried away, and Joe Atlee, leaning back in his chair, said, 'Well, we gave the Saxon a canter, I think. As you know, Dick, that fellow is no end of a swell.'

'You know nothing about him,' said the other gruffly.

'Only so much as newspapers could tell me. He's Master of the Horse in the Viceroy's household, and the other fellow is Private Secretary, and some connection besides. I say, Dick, it's all King James's times back again. There has not been so much grandeur here for six or eight generations.'

'There has not been a more absurd speech made than that, within the time.'

'And he is really somebody?' said Nina to Atlee.

'A *gran signore davvero*,' said he pompously. 'If you don't sing your very best for him, I'll swear you are a republican.'

'Come, take my arm, Nina. I may call you Nina, may I not?' whispered Kearney.

'Certainly, if I may call you Joe.'

'You may, if you like,' said he roughly, 'but my name is Dick.'

'I am Beppo, and very much at your orders,' said Atlee, stepping forward and leading her away.

CHAPTER XIV

AT DINNER

They were assembled in the drawing-room before dinner, when Lord Kilgobbin arrived, heated, dusty, and tired, after his twelve miles' drive. 'I say, girls,' said he, putting his head inside the door, 'is it true that our distinguished guest is not coming down to dinner, for, if so, I'll not wait to dress?'

'No, papa; he said he'd stay with Mr. Walpole. They've

been receiving and despatching telegrams all day, and seem to have the whole world on their hands,' said Kate.

'Well, sir, what did you do at the sessions?'

'Yes, my lord,' broke in Nina, eager to show her more mindful regard to his rank than Atlee displayed; 'tell us your news.'

'I suspect we have got two of them, and are on the traces of the others. They are Louth men, and were sent special here to give me a lesson, as they call it. That's what our blessed newspapers have brought us to. Some idle vagabond, at his wits' end for an article, fastens on some unlucky country gentleman, neither much better nor worse than his neighbours, holds him up to public reprobation, perfectly sure that within a week's time some rascal who owes him a grudge—the fellow he has evicted for non-payment of rent, the blackguard he prosecuted for perjury, or some other of the like stamp—will write a piteous letter to the editor, relating his wrongs. The next act of the drama is a notice on the hall door, with a coffin at the top; and the piece closes with a charge of slugs in your body, as you are on your road to mass. Now, if I had the making of the laws, the first fellow I'd lay hands on would be the newspaper writer. Eh, Master Atlee, am I right?'

'I go with you to the furthest extent, my lord.'

'I vote we hang Joe, then,' cried Dick. 'He is the only member of the fraternity I have any acquaintance with.'

'What—do you tell me that you write for the papers?' asked my lord slyly.

'He's quizzing, sir; he knows right well I have no gifts of that sort.'

'Here's dinner, papa. Will you give Nina your arm? Mr. Atlee, you are to take me.'

'You'll not agree with me, Nina, my dear,' said the old man, as he led her along; 'but I'm heartily glad we have not that great swell who dined with us yesterday.'

'I do agree with you, uncle—I dislike him.'

'Perhaps I am unjust to him; but I thought he treated us all with a sort of bland pity that I found very offensive.'

'Yes; I thought that too. His manner seemed to say, "I am very sorry for you, but what can be done?"'

'Is the other fellow—the wounded one—as bad?'

She pursed up her lip, slightly shrugged her shoulders, and then said, 'There's not a great deal to choose between them; but I think I like him better.'

'How do you like Dick, eh?' said he, in a whisper.

'Oh, so much,' said she, with one of her half-downcast looks,

but which never prevented her seeing what passed in her neighbour's face.

'Well, don't let him fall in love with *you*,' said he, with a smile, 'for it would be bad for you both.'

'But why should he?' said she, with an air of innocence.

'Just because I don't see how he is to escape it. What's Master Atlee saying to you, Kitty?'

'He's giving me some hints about horse-breaking,' said she quietly.

'Is he, by George? Well, I'd like to see him follow you over that fallen timber in the back lawn. We'll have you out, Master Joe, and give you a field-day to-morrow,' said the old man.

'I vote we do,' cried Dick; 'unless, better still, we could persuade Miss Betty to bring the dogs over and give us a cub-hunt.'

'I want to see a cub-hunt,' broke in Nina.

'Do you mean that you ride to hounds, Cousin Nina?' asked Dick.

'I should think that any one who has taken the ox-fences on the Roman Campagna, as I have, might venture to face your small stone-walls here.'

That's plucky, anyhow; and I hope, Joe, it will put you on your metal to show yourself worthy of your companionship. What is old Mathew looking so mysteriously about? What do you want?'

The old servant thus addressed had gone about the room with the air of one not fully decided to whom to speak, and at last he leaned over Miss Kearney's shoulder, and whispered a few words in her ear. 'Of course not, Mat!' said she, and then turning to her father—'Mat has such an opinion of my medical skill, he wants me to see Mr. Walpole, who, it seems, has got up, and evidently increased his pain by it.'

'Oh, but is there no doctor near us?' asked Nina eagerly.

'I'd go at once,' said Kate frankly, 'but my skill does not extend to surgery.'

'I have some little knowledge in that way: I studied and walked the hospitals for a couple of years,' broke out Joe. 'Shall I go up to him?'

'By all means,' cried several together, and Joe rose and followed Mathew upstairs.

'Oh, are you a medical man?' cried Lockwood, as the other entered.

'After a fashion, I may say I am. At least, I can tell you where my skill will come to its limit, and that is something.'

'Look here, then—he would insist on getting up, and I fear he has displaced the position of the bones. You must be very gentle, for the pain is terrific.'

'No; there is no great mischief done—the fractured parts are in a proper position. It is the mere pain of disturbance. Cover it all over with the ice again, and'—here he felt his pulse—'let him have some weak brandy-and-water.'

'That's sensible advice—I feel it. I am shivery all over,' said Walpole.

'I'll go and make a brew for you,' cried Joe, 'and you shall have it as hot as you can drink it.'

He had scarcely left the room, when he returned with the smoking compound.

'You're such a jolly doctor,' said Walpole, 'I feel sure you'd not refuse me a cigar?'

'Certainly not.'

'Only think! that old barbarian who was here this morning said I was to have nothing but weak tea or iced lemonade.'

Lockwood selected a mild-looking weed, and handed it to his friend, and was about to offer one to Atlee, when he said—

'But we have taken you from your dinner—pray go back again.'

'No, we were at dessert. I'll stay here and have a smoke, if you will let me. Will it bore you, though?'

'On the contrary,' said Walpole, 'your company will be a great boon to us; and as for myself, you have done me good already.'

'What would you say, Major Lockwood, to taking my place below-stairs? They are just sitting over their wine—some very pleasant claret—and the young ladies, I perceive, here, give half an hour of their company before they leave the dining-room.'

'Here goes, then,' said Lockwood. 'Now that you remind me of it, I do want a glass of wine.'

Lockwood found the party below-stairs eagerly discussing Joe Atlee's medical qualifications, and doubting whether, if it was a knowledge of civil engineering or marine gunnery had been required, he would not have been equally ready to offer himself for the emergency.

'I'll lay my life on it, if the real doctor arrives, Joe will take the lead in the consultation,' cried Dick: 'he is the most unabashable villain in Europe.'

'Well, he has put Cecil all right,' said Lockwood: 'he has settled the arm most comfortably on the pillow, the pain is decreasing every moment, and by his pleasant and jolly talk he is making Walpole even forget it at times.'

This was exactly what Atlee was doing. Watching carefully the sick man's face, he plied him with just that amount of amusement that he could bear without fatigue. He told him the absurd versions that had got abroad of the incident in the press; and cautiously feeling his way, went on to tell how Dick Kearney had started from town full of the most fiery intentions towards that visitor whom the newspapers called a 'noted profligate' of London celebrity. 'If you had not been shot before, we were to have managed it for you now,' said he.

'Surely these fellows who wrote this had never heard of me.'

'Of course they had not, further than you were on the Viceroy's staff; but is not that ample warranty for profligacy? Besides, the real intention was not to assail you, but the people here who admitted you.' Thus talking, he led Walpole to own that he had no acquaintanceship with the Kearneys, that a mere passing curiosity to see the interesting house had provoked his request, to which the answer, coming from an old friend, led to his visit. Through this channel Atlee drew him on to the subject of the Greek girl and her parentage. As Walpole sketched the society of Rome, Atlee, who had cultivated the gift of listening fully as much as that of talking, knew where to seem interested by the views of life thrown out, and where to show a racy enjoyment of the little humoristic bits of description which the other was rather proud of his skill in deploying; and as Atlee always appeared so conversant with the family history of the people they were discussing, Walpole spoke with unbounded freedom and openness.

'You must have been astonished to meet the "Titian Girl" in Ireland?' said Joe at last, for he had caught up the epithet dropped accidentally in the other's narrative, and kept it for use.

'Was I not! but if my memory had been clearer, I should have remembered she had Irish connections. I had heard of Lord Kilgobbin on the other side of the Alps.'

'I don't doubt that the title would meet a readier acceptance there than here.'

'Ah, you think so!' cried Walpole. 'What is the meaning of a rank that people acknowledge or deny at pleasure? Is this peculiar to Ireland?'

'If you had asked whether persons anywhere else would like to maintain such a strange pretension, I might perhaps have answered you.'

'For the few minutes of his visit to me, I liked him; he seemed frank, hearty, and genial.'

'I suppose he is, and I suspect this folly of the lordship is no fancy of his own.'

'Nor the daughter's, then, I'll be bound?'

'No; the son, I take it, has all the ambition of the house.'

'Do you know them well?'

'No, I never saw them till yesterday. The son and I are chums: we live together, and have done so these three years.'

'You like your visit here, however?'

'Yes. It's rather good fun on the whole. I was afraid of the indoor life when I was coming down, but it's pleasanter than I looked for.'

'When I asked you the question, it was not out of idle curiosity. I had a strong personal interest in your answer. In fact, it was another way of inquiring whether it would be a great sacrifice to tear yourself away from this.'

'No, inasmuch as the tearing-away process must take place in a couple of days—three at farthest.'

'That makes what I have to propose all the easier. It is a matter of great urgency for me to reach Dublin at once. This unlucky incident has been so represented by the newspapers as to give considerable uneasiness to the Government, and they are even threatened with a discussion on it in the House. Now, I'd start to-morrow, if I thought I could travel with safety. You have so impressed me with your skill, that, if I dared, I'd ask you to convoy me up. Of course I mean as my physician.'

'But I'm not one, nor ever intend to be.'

'You studied, however?'

'As I have done scores of things. I know a little bit of criminal law, have done some shipbuilding, rode *haute école* in Cooke's circus, and, after M. Dumas, I am considered the best amateur macaroni-maker in Europe.'

'And which of these careers do you intend to abide by?'

'None, not one of them. "Financing" is the only pursuit that pays largely. I intend to go in for money.'

'I should like to hear your ideas on that subject.'

'So you shall, as we travel up to town.'

'You accept my offer, then?'

'Of course I do. I am delighted to have so many hours in your company. I believe I can safely say I have that amount of skill to be of service to you. One begins his medical experience with fractures. They are the pothooks and hangers of surgery, and I have gone that far. Now, what are your plans?'

'My plans are to leave this early to-morrow, so as to rest

during the hot hours of the day, and reach Dublin by nightfall. Why do you smile?'

'I smile at your notion of climate; but I never knew any man who had been once in Italy able to disabuse himself of the idea that there were three or four hours every summer day to be passed with closed shutters and iced drinks.'

'Well, I believe I was thinking of a fiercer sun and a hotter soil than these. To return to my project: we can find means of posting, carriage and horses, in the village. I forget its name.'

'I'll take care of all that. At what hour will you start?'

'I should say by six or seven. I shall not sleep; and I shall be all impatience till we are away.'

'Well, is there anything else to be thought of?'

'There is—that is, I have something on my mind, and I am debating with myself how far, on a half-hour's acquaintance, I can make you a partner in it.'

'I cannot help you by my advice. I can only say that if you like to trust me, I'll know how to respect the confidence.'

Walpole looked steadily and steadfastly at him, and the examination seemed to satisfy him, for he said, 'I will trust you—not that the matter is a secret in any sense that involves consequences; but it is a thing that needs a little tact and discretion, a slight exercise of a light hand, which is what my friend Lockwood fails in. Now you could do it.'

'If I can, I will. What is it?'

'Well, the matter is this. I have written a few lines here, very illegibly and badly, as you may believe, for they were with my left hand; and besides having the letter conveyed to its address, I need a few words of explanation.'

'The Titian Girl,' muttered Joe, as though thinking aloud.

'Why do you say so?'

'Oh, it was easy enough to see her greater anxiety and uneasiness about you. There was an actual flash of jealousy across her features when Miss Kearney proposed coming up to see you.'

'And was this remarked, think you?'

'Only by me. *I* saw, and let her see I saw it, and we understood each other from that moment.'

'I mustn't let you mistake me. You are not to suppose that there is anything between Mademoiselle Kostalergi and myself. I knew a good deal about her father, and there were family circumstances in which I was once able to be of use; and I wished to let her know that if at any time she desired to communicate with me, I could procure an address, under which she could write with freedom.'

'As for instance: "J. Atlee, 48 Old Square, Trinity College, Dublin."'

'Well, I did not think of that at the moment,' said Walpole, smiling. 'Now,' continued he, 'though I have written all this, it is so blotted and disgraceful generally—done with the left hand, and while in great pain—that I think it would be as well not to send the letter, but simply a message——'

Atlee nodded, and Walpole went on: 'A message to say that I was wishing to write, but unable; and that if I had her permission, so soon as my fingers could hold a pen, to finish—yes, to finish that communication I had already begun, and if she felt there was no inconvenience in writing to me, under cover to your care, I should pledge myself to devote all my zeal and my best services to her interests.'

'In fact, I am to lead her to suppose she ought to have the most implicit confidence in you, and to believe in me, because I say so.'

'I do not exactly see that these are my instructions to you.'

'Well, you certainly want to write to her.'

'I don't know that I do.'

'At all events, you want her to write to *you*.'

'You are nearer the mark now.'

'That ought not to be very difficult to arrange. I'll go down now and have a cup of tea, and I may, I hope, come up and see you again before bed-time.'

'Wait one moment,' cried Walpole, as the other was about to leave the room. 'Do you see a small tray on that table yonder, with some trinkets? Yes, that is it. Well, will you do me the favour to choose something amongst them as your fee? Come, come, you know you are my doctor now, and I insist on this. There's nothing of any value there, and you will have no misgivings.'

'Am I to take it haphazard?' asked Atlee.

'Whatever you like,' said the other indolently.

'I have selected a ring,' said Atlee, as he drew it on his finger.

'Not an opal?'

'Yes, it is an opal with brilliants round it.'

'I'd rather you'd taken all the rest than that. Not that I ever wear it, but somehow it has a bit of memory attached to it!'

'Do you know,' said Atlee gravely, 'you are adding immensely to the value I desired to see in it? I wanted something as a souvenir of you—what the Germans call an *Andenken*, and here is evidently what has some secret clue to your affections. It was not an old love-token?'

'No; or I should certainly not part with it.'

'It did not belong to a friend now no more?'

'Nor that either,' said he, smiling at the other's persistent curiosity.

'Then if it be neither the gift of an old love nor a lost friend, I'll not relinquish it,' cried Joe.

'Be it so, said Walpole, half carelessly. 'Mine was a mere caprice after all. It is linked with a reminiscence—there's the whole of it; but if you care for it, pray keep it.'

'I do care for it, and I will keep it.'

It was a very peculiar smile that curled Walpole's lip as he heard this speech, and there was an expression in his eyes that seemed to say, 'What manner of man is this, what sort of nature, new and strange to me, is he made of?'

'Bye-bye!' said Atlee carelessly, and he strolled away.

CHAPTER XV

IN THE GARDEN AT DUSK

When Atlee quitted Walpole's room, he was far too full of doubt and speculation to wish to join the company in the drawing-room. He had need of time to collect his thoughts, too, and arrange his plans. This sudden departure of his would, he well knew, displease Kearney. It would savour of a degree of impertinence, in treating their hospitality so cavalierly, that Dick was certain to resent, and not less certain to attribute to a tuft-hunting weakness on Atlee's part of which he had frequently declared he detected signs in Joe's character.

'Be it so. I'll only say, you'll not see me cultivate "swells" for the pleasure of their society, or even the charms of their cookery. If I turn them to no better uses than display, Master Dick, you may sneer freely at me. I have long wanted to make acquaintance with one of these fellows, and luck has now given me the chance. Let us see if I know how to profit by it.'

And, thus muttering to himself, he took his way to the farmyard, to find a messenger to despatch to the village for post-horses.

The fact that he was not the owner of a half-crown in the world very painfully impressed itself on a negotiation, which, to be prompt, should be prepaid, and which he was endeavouring to explain to two or three very idle but very incredulous listeners —not one of whom could be induced to accept a ten miles'

tramp on a drizzling night without the prompting of a tip in advance.

'It 's every step of eight miles,' cried one.

'No, but it 's ten,' asseverated another with energy, 'by rayson that you must go by the road. There 's nobody would venture across the bog in the dark.'

'Wid five shillings in my hand——'

'And five more when ye come back,' continued another, who was terrified at the low estimate so rashly adventured.

'If one had even a shilling or two to pay for a drink when he got in to Kilbeggan wet through and shivering——'

The speaker was not permitted to finish his ignominiously low proposal, and a low growl of disapprobation smothered his words.

'Do you mean to tell me,' said Joe angrily, 'that there 's not a man here will step over to the town to order a chaise and post-horses?'

'And if yer honour will put his hand in his pocket and tempt us with a couple of crown-pieces, there 's no saying what we wouldn't do, said a little bandy old fellow, who was washing his face at the pump.

'And are crown-pieces so plentiful with you down here that you can earn them so easily?' said Atlee, with a sneer.

'Be me sowl, yer honour, it 's thinking that they 're not so aisy to come at, makes us a bit lazy this evening!' said a ragged fellow, with a grin, which was quickly followed by a hearty laugh from those around him.

Something that sounded like a titter above his head made Atlee look up, and there, exactly over where he stood, was Nina, leaning over a little stone balcony in front of a window, an amused witness of the scene beneath.

'I have two words for yourself,' cried he to her in Italian. 'Will you come down to the garden for one moment?'

'Cannot the two words be said in the drawing-room?' asked she, half saucily, in the same language.

'No, they cannot be said in the drawing-room,' continued he sternly.

'It 's dropping rain. I should get wet.'

'Take an umbrella, then, but come. Mind me, Signora Nina, I am the bearer of a message for you.'

There was something almost disdainful in the toss of her head as she heard these words, and she hastily retired from the balcony and entered the room.

Atlee watched her, by no means certain what her gesture might portend. Was she indignant with him for the liberty he

had taken? or was she about to comply with his request, and meet him? He knew too little of her to determine which was the more likely; and he could not help feeling that, had he only known her longer, his doubt might have been just as great. Her mind, thought he, is perhaps like my own: it has many turnings, and she's never very certain which one of them she will follow. Somehow, this imputed wilfulness gave her, to his eyes, a charm scarcely second to that of her exceeding beauty. And what beauty it was! The very perfection of symmetry in every feature when at rest, while the varied expressions of her face as she spoke, or smiled, or listened, imparted a fascination which only needed the charm of her low liquid voice to be irresistible.

How she vulgarises that pretty girl, her cousin, by mere contrast! What subtle essence is it, apart from hair and eyes and skin, that spreads an atmosphere of conquest over these natures, and how is it that men have no ascendencies of this sort—nothing that imparts to their superiority the sense that worship of them is in itself an ecstasy?

'Take my message into town,' said he to a fellow near, 'and you shall have a sovereign when you come back with the horses'; and with this he strolled away across a little paddock and entered the garden. It was a large, ill-cultivated space, more orchard than garden, with patches of smooth turf, through which daffodils and lilies were scattered, and little clusters of carnations occasionally showed where flower-beds had once existed. 'What would I not give,' thought Joe, as he strolled along the velvety sward, over which a clear moonlight had painted the forms of many a straggling branch—'What would I not give to be the son of a house like this, with an old and honoured name, with an ancestry strong enough to build upon for future pretensions, and then with an old home, peaceful, tranquil, and unmolested, where, as in such a spot as this, one might dream of great things, perhaps more, might achieve them! What books would I not write! What novels, in which, fashioning the hero out of my own heart, I could tell scores of impressions the world had made upon me in its aspect of religion, or of politics, or of society! What essays could I not compose here—the mind elevated by that buoyancy which comes of the consciousness of being free for a great effort! Free from the vulgar interruptions that cling to poverty like a garment, free from the paltry cares of daily subsistence, free from the damaging incidents of a doubtful position and a station that must be continually asserted. That one disparagement, perhaps, worst of all,' cried he aloud: 'how is a man to enjoy his estate if he is "put upon his title" every day of the week?

One might as well be a French Emperor, and go every spring to the country for a character.'

'What shocking indignity is this you are dreaming of?' said a very soft voice near him, and turning he saw Nina, who was moving across the grass, with her dress so draped as to show the most perfect instep and ankle with a very unguarded indifference.

'This is very damp for you; shall we not come out into the walk?' said he.

'It is very damp,' said she quickly; 'but I came because you said you had a message for me: is this true?'

'Do you think I could deceive you?' said he, with a sort of tender reproachfulness.

'It might not be so very easy, if you were to try,' replied she, laughing.

'That is not the most gracious way to answer me.'

'Well, I don't believe we came here to pay compliments; certainly I did not, and my feet are very wet already—look there, and see the ruin of a *chaussure* I shall never replace in this dear land of coarse leather and hobnails.'

As she spoke she showed her feet, around which her bronzed shoes hung limp and misshapen.

'Would that I could be permitted to dry them with my kisses,' said he, as, stooping, he wiped them with his handkerchief, but so deferentially and so respectfully, as though the homage had been tendered to a princess. Nor did she for a moment hesitate to accept the service.

'There, that will do,' said she haughtily. 'Now for your message.'

'We are going away, mademoiselle,' said Atlee, with a melancholy tone.

'And who are "we," sir?'

'By "we," mademoiselle, I meant to convey Walpole and myself.' And now he spoke with the irritation of one who had felt a pull-up.

'Ah, indeed!' said she, smiling, and showing her pearly teeth. '"We" meant Mr. Walpole and Mr. Atlee.'

'You should never have guessed it?' cried he in question.

'Never—certainly,' was her cool rejoinder.

'Well! *He* was less defiant, or mistrustful, or whatever be the name for it. We were only friends of half an hour's growth when he proposed the journey. He asked me to accompany him as a favour; and he did more, mademoiselle: he confided to me a mission—a very delicate and confidential mission—such an office as one does not usually depute to him of whose fidelity or good

faith he has a doubt, not to speak of certain smaller qualities, such as tact and good taste.'

'Of whose possession Mr. Atlee is now asserting himself?' said she quietly.

He grew crimson at a sarcasm whose impassiveness made it all the more cutting.

'My mission was in this wise, mademoiselle,' said he, with a forced calm in his manner. 'I was to learn from Mademoiselle Kostalergi if she should desire to communicate with Mr. Walpole touching certain family interests in which his counsels might be of use; and in this event, I was to place at her disposal an address by which her letters should reach him.'

'No, sir,' said she quietly, 'you have totally mistaken any instructions that were given you. Mr. Walpole never pretended that I had written or was likely to write to him; he never said that he was in any way concerned in family questions that pertained to me; least of all did he presume to suppose that if I had occasion to address him by letter, I should do so under cover to another.'

'You discredit my character of envoy, then?' said he, smiling easily.

'Totally and completely, Mr. Atlee; and I only wait for you yourself to admit that I am right, to hold out my hand to you and say let us be friends.'

'I'd perjure myself twice at such a price. Now for the hand.'

'Not so fast—first the confession,' said she, with a faint smile.

'Well, on my honour,' cried he seriously, 'he told me he hoped you might write to him. I did not clearly understand about what, but it pointed to some matter in which a family interest was mixed up, and that you might like your communication to have the reserve of secrecy.'

'All this is but a modified version of what you were to disavow.'

'Well, I am only repeating it now to show you how far I am going to perjure myself.'

'That is, you see, in fact, that Mr. Walpole could never have presumed to give you such instructions—that gentlemen do not send such messages to young ladies—do not presume to say that they dare do so; and last of all, if they ever should chance upon one whose nice tact and cleverness would have fitted him to be the bearer of such a commission, those same qualities of tact and cleverness would have saved him from undertaking it. That is what you see, Mr. Atlee, is it not?'

'You are right. I see it all.' And now he seized her hand

'You are right, I see it all,' and now he seized her hand and kissed it.

and kissed it as though he had won the right to that rapturous enjoyment.

She drew her hand away, but so slowly and so gently as to convey nothing of rebuke or displeasure. 'And so you are going away?' said she softly.

'Yes; Walpole has some pressing reason to be at once in Dublin. He is afraid to make the journey without a doctor; but rather than risk delay in sending for one, he is willing to take *me* as his body-surgeon, and I have accepted the charge.'

The frankness with which he said this seemed to influence her in his favour, and she said, with a tone of like candour, 'You were right. His family are people of influence, and will not readily forget such a service.'

Though he winced under the words, and showed that it was not exactly the mode in which he wanted his courtesy to be regarded, she took no account of the passing irritation, but went on—

'If you fancy you know something about me, Mr. Atlee, *I* know far more about *you*. Your chum, Dick Kearney, has been so outspoken as to his friend, that my cousin Kate and I have been accustomed to discuss you like a near acquaintance—what am I saying?—I mean like an old friend.'

'I am very grateful for this interest; but will you kindly say what is the version my friend Dick has given of me? what are the lights that have fallen upon my humble character?'

'Do you fancy that either of us have time at this moment to open so large a question? Would not the estimate of Mr. Joseph Atlee be another mode of discussing the times we live in, and the young gentlemen, more or less ambitious, who want to influence them? would not the question embrace everything, from the difficulties of Ireland to the puzzling embarrassments of a clever young man who has everything in his favour in life, except the only thing that makes life worth living for?'

'You mean fortune—money?'

'Of course I mean money. What is so powerless as poverty? do I not know it—not of yesterday, or the day before, but for many a long year? What so helpless, what so jarring to temper, so dangerous to all principle, and so subversive of all dignity? I can afford to say these things, and you can afford to hear them, for there is a sort of brotherhood between us. We claim the same land for our origin. Whatever our birthplace, we are both Bohemians!'

She held out her hand as she spoke, and with such an air of cordiality and frankness that Joe caught the spirit of the action

at once, and, bending over, pressed his lips to it, as he said, 'I seal the bargain.'

'And swear to it?'

'I swear to it,' cried he.

'There, that is enough. Let us go back, or rather, let me go back alone. I will tell them I have seen you, and heard of your approaching departure.'

CHAPTER XVI

THE TWO 'KEARNEYS'

A VISIT to his father was not usually one of those things that young Kearney either speculated on with pleasure beforehand, or much enjoyed when it came. Certain measures of decorum, and some still more pressing necessities of economy, required that he should pass some months of every year at home; but they were always seasons looked forward to with a mild terror, and when the time drew nigh, met with a species of dogged, fierce resolution that certainly did not serve to lighten the burden of the infliction; and though Kate's experience of this temper was not varied by any exceptions, she would still go on looking with pleasure for the time of his visit, and plotting innumerable little schemes for enjoyment while he should remain. The first day or two after his arrival usually went over pleasantly enough. Dick came back full of his town life, and its amusements; and Kate was quite satisfied to accept gaiety at second-hand. He had so much to tell of balls, picnics, charming rides in the Phœnix, of garden-parties in the beautiful environs of Dublin, or more pretentious entertainments, which took the shape of excursions to Bray or Killiney, that she came at last to learn all his friends and acquaintances by name, and never confounded the stately beauties that he worshipped afar off with the 'awfully jolly girls' whom he flirted with quite irresponsibly. She knew, too, all about his male companions, from the flash young fellow-commoner from Downshire, who had a saddle-horse and a mounted groom waiting for him every day after morning lecture, down to that scampish Joe Atlee, with whose scrapes and eccentricities he filled many an idle hour.

Independently of her gift as a good listener, Kate would very willingly have heard all Dick's adventures and descriptions not only twice but tenth-told; just as the child listens with unwearied attention to the fairy-tale whose end he is well aware of, but still

likes the little detail falling fresh upon his ear, so would this young girl make him go over some narratives she knew by heart, and would not suffer him to omit the slightest incident or most trifling circumstance that heightened the history of the story.

As to Dick, however, the dull monotony of the daily life, the small and vulgar interests of the house or the farm, which formed the only topics, the undergrowl of economy that ran through every conversation, as though penuriousness was the great object of existence—but, perhaps more than all these together, the early hours—so overcame him that he at first became low-spirited, and then sulky, seldom appearing save at meal-times, and certainly contributing little to the pleasure of the meeting; so that at last, though she might not easily have been brought to the confession, Kate Kearney saw the time of Dick's departure approach without regret, and was actually glad to be relieved from that terror of a rupture between her father and her brother of which not a day passed without a menace.

Like all men who aspire to something in Ireland, Kearney desired to see his son a barrister; for great as are the rewards of that high career, they are not the fascinations which appeal most strongly to the squirearchy, who love to think that a country gentleman may know a little law and be never the richer for it—may have acquired a profession, and yet never know what was a client or what a fee.

That Kearney of Kilgobbin Castle should be reduced to tramping his way down the Bachelor's Walk to the Four Courts, with a stuff bag carried behind him, was not to be thought of; but there were so many positions in life, so many situations for which that gifted creature the barrister of six years' standing was alone eligible, that Kearney was very anxious his son should be qualified to accept that £1000 or £1800 a year which a gentleman could hold without any shadow upon his capacity, or the slightest reflection on his industry.

Dick Kearney, however, had not only been living a very gay life in town, but, to avail himself of a variety of those flattering attentions which this interested world bestows by preference on men of some pretension, had let it be believed that he was the heir to a very considerable estate, and, by great probability, also to a title. To have admitted that he thought it necessary to follow any career at all, would have been to abdicate these pretensions, and so he evaded that question of the law in all discussions with his father, sometimes affecting to say he had not made up his mind, or that he had scruples of conscience about a barrister's calling, or that he doubted whether the Bar of Ireland

was not, like most high institutions, going to be abolished by Act of Parliament, and all the litigation of the land be done by deputy in Westminster Hall.

On the morning after the visitors took their departure from Kilgobbin, old Kearney, who usually relapsed from any exercise of hospitality into a more than ordinary amount of parsimony, sat thinking over the various economies by which the domestic budget could be squared, and after a very long séance with old Gill, in which the question of raising some rents and diminishing certain bounties was discussed, he sent up the steward to Mr. Richard's room to say he wanted to speak to him.

Dick at the time of the message was stretched full length on a sofa, smoking a meerschaum, and speculating how it was that the 'swells' took to Joe Atlee, and what they saw in that confounded snob, instead of himself. Having in a degree satisfied himself that Atlee's success was all owing to his intense and outrageous flattery, he was startled from his reverie by the servant's entrance.

'How is he this morning, Tim?' asked he, with a knowing look. 'Is he fierce—is there anything up—have the heifers been passing the night in the wheat, or has any one come over from Moate with a bill?'

'No, sir, none of them; but his blood's up about something. Ould Gill is gone down the stair swearing like mad, and Miss Kate is down the road with a face like a turkey-cock.'

'I think you'd better say I was out, Tim—that you couldn't find me in my room.'

'I daren't, sir. He saw that little Skye terrier of yours below, and he said to me, "Mr. Dick is sure to be at home; tell him I want him immediately."'

'But if I had a bad headache, and couldn't leave my bed, wouldn't that be excuse enough?'

'It would make him come here. And if I was you, sir, I'd go where I could get away myself, and not where he could stay as long as he liked.'

'There's something in that. I'll go, Tim. Say I'll be down in a minute.'

Very careful to attire himself in the humblest costume of his wardrobe, and specially mindful that neither studs nor watch-chain should offer offensive matter of comment, he took his way towards the dreary little den, which, filled with old top-boots, driving-whips, garden-implements, and fishing-tackle, was known as 'the lord's study,' but whose sole literary ornament was a shelf of antiquated almanacs. There was a strange grimness about his

father's aspect which struck young Kearney as he crossed the threshold. His face wore the peculiar sardonic expression of one who had not only hit upon an expedient, but achieved a surprise, as he held an open letter in one hand and motioned with the other to a seat.

'I've been waiting till these people were gone, Dick—till we had a quiet house of it—to say a few words to you. I suppose your friend Atlee is not coming back here?'

'I suppose not, sir.'

'I don't like him, Dick; and I'm much mistaken if he is a good fellow.'

'I don't think he is actually a bad fellow, sir. He is often terribly hard up and has to do scores of shifty things, but I never found him out in anything dishonourable or false.'

'That's a matter of taste, perhaps. Maybe you and I might differ about what was honourable or what was false. At all events, he was under our roof here, and if those nobs—or swells, I believe you call them—were like to be of use to any of us, we, the people that were entertaining them, were the first to be thought of; but your pleasant friend thought differently, and made such good use of his time that he cut you out altogether, Dick—he left you nowhere.'

'Really, sir, it never occurred to me till now to take that view of the situation.'

'Well, take that view of it now, and see how you'll like it! *You* have your way to work in life as well as Mr. Atlee. From all I can judge, you're scarcely as well calculated to do it as he is. You have not his smartness, you have not his brains, and you have not his impudence—and, 'faith, I'm much mistaken but it's the best of the three!'

'I don't perceive, sir, that we are necessarily pitted against each other at all.'

'Don't you? Well, so much the worse for you if you don't see that every fellow that has nothing in the world is the rival of every other fellow that's in the same plight. For every one that swims, ten, at least, sink.'

'Perhaps, sir, to begin, I never fully realised the first condition, I was not exactly aware that I was without anything in the world.'

'I'm coming to that, if you'll have a little patience. Here is a letter from Tom M'Keown, at Abbey Street. I wrote to him about raising a few hundreds on mortgage, to clear off some of our debts, and have a trifle in hand for drainage and to buy stock, and he tells me that there's no use in going to any of the money-

lenders so long as your extravagance continues to be the talk of the town. Ay, you needn't grow red nor frown that way. The letter was a private one to myself, and I 'm only telling it to you in confidence. Hear what he says: "You have a right to make your son a fellow-commoner if you like, and he has a right, by his father's own showing, to behave like a man of fortune; but neither of you have a right to believe that men who advance money will accept these pretensions as good security, or think anything but the worse of you both for your extravagance."'

'And you don't mean to horsewhip him, sir?' burst out Dick.

'Not, at any rate, till I pay off two thousand pounds that I owe him, and two years' interest at six per cent. that he has suffered me to become his debtor for.'

'Lame as he is, I'll kick him before twenty-four hours are over.'

'If you do, he'll shoot you like a dog, and it wouldn't be the first time he handled a pistol. No, no, Master Dick. Whether for better or worse, I can't tell, but the world is not what it was when I was your age. There's no provoking a man to a duel nowadays; nor no posting him when he won't fight. Whether it's your fortune is damaged or your feelings hurt, you must look to the law to redress you; and to take your cause into your own hands is to have the whole world against you.'

'And this insult is, then, to be submitted to?'

'It is, first of all, to be ignored. It's the same as if you never heard it. Just get it out of your head, and listen to what he says. Tom M'Keown is one of the keenest fellows I know; and he has business with men who know not only what's doing in Downing Street, but what's going to be done there. Now here's two things that are about to take place: one is the same as done, for it's all ready prepared—the taking away the landlord's right, and making the State determine what rent the tenant shall pay, and how long his tenure will be. The second won't come for two sessions after, but it will be law all the same. There's to be no primogeniture class at all, no entail on land, but a subdivision, like in America and, I believe, in France.'

'I don't believe it, sir. These would amount to a revolution.'

'Well, and why not? Ain't we always going through a sort of mild revolution? What's parliamentary government but revolution, weakened, if you like, like watered grog, but the spirit is there all the same. Don't fancy that, because you can give it a hard name, you can destroy it. But hear what Tom is coming to. "Be early," says he, "take time by the forelock: get rid of your entail and get rid of your land. Don't wait till the Government

does both for you, and have to accept whatever condition the law will cumber you with, but be before them! Get your son to join you in docking the entail; petition before the court for a sale, yourself or somebody for you; and wash your hands clean of it all. It's bad property, in a very ticklish country," says Tom—and he dashes the words—"bad property in a very ticklish country; and if you take my advice, you'll get clear of both." You shall read it all yourself by and by; I am only giving you the substance of it, and none of the reasons.'

'This is a question for very grave consideration, to say the least of it. It is a bold proposal.'

'So it is, and so says Tom himself; but he adds: "There's no time to be lost; for once it gets about how Gladstone's going to deal with land, and what Bright has in his head for eldest sons, you might as well whistle as try to dispose of that property." To be sure, he says,' added he, after a pause—'he says, "If you insist on holding on—if you cling to the dirty acres because they were your father's and your great grandfather's, and if you think that being Kearney of Kilgobbin is a sort of title, in the name of God stay where you are, but keep down your expenses. Give up some of your useless servants, reduce your saddle-horses"—*my* saddle-horses, Dick! "Try if you can live without foxhunting." Foxhunting! "Make your daughter know that she needn't dress like a duchess"—poor Kitty's very like a duchess; "and, above all, persuade your lazy, idle, and very self-sufficient son to take to some respectable line of life to gain his living. I wouldn't say that he mightn't be an apothecary; but if he liked law better than physic, I might be able to do something for him in my own office."'

'Have you done, sir?' said Dick hastily, as his father wiped his spectacles, and seemed to prepare for another heat.

'He goes on to say that he always requires one hundred and fifty guineas fee with a young man; "but we are old friends, Matthew Kearney," says he, "and we'll make it pounds."'

'To fit me to be an attorney!' said Dick, articulating each word with a slow and almost savage determination.

'Faith! it would have been well for us if one of the family had been an attorney before now. We'd never have gone into that action about the mill-race, nor had to pay those heavy damages for levelling Moore's barn. A little law would have saved us from evicting those blackguards at Mullenalick, or kicking Mr. Hall's bailiff before witnesses.'

To arrest his father's recollection of the various occasions on which his illegality had betrayed him into loss and damage, Dick

blurted out, 'I 'd rather break stones on the road than I 'd be an attorney.'

'Well, you 'll not have to go far for employment, for they are just laying down new metal this moment; and you needn't lose time over it,' said Kearney, with a wave of his hand, to show that the audience was over and the conference ended.

'There 's just one favour I would ask, sir,' said Dick, with his hand on the lock.

'You want a hammer, I suppose,' said his father, with a grin —'isn't *that* it?'

With something that, had it been uttered aloud, sounded very like a bitter malediction, Dick rushed from the room, slamming the door violently after him as he went.

'That 's the temper that helps a man to get on in life,' said the old man, as he turned once more to his accounts, and set to work to see where he had blundered in his figures.

CHAPTER XVII

DICK'S REVERIE

When Dick Kearney left his father, he walked from the house, and not knowing or much caring in what direction he went, turned into the garden.

It was a wild, neglected sort of spot, with fruit-trees of great size, long past bearing, and close underwood in places that barred the passage. Here and there little patches of cultivation appeared, sometimes flowering plants, but oftener vegetables. One long alley, with tall hedges of box, had been preserved, and led to a little mound planted with laurels and arbutus, and known as 'Laurel Hill'; here a little rustic summer-house had once stood, and still, though now in ruins, showed where, in former days, people came to taste the fresh breeze above the tree-tops, and enjoy the wide range of a view that stretched to the Slieve-Bloom Mountains, nearly thirty miles away.

Young Kearney reached this spot, and sat down to gaze upon a scene every detail of which was well known to him, but of which he was utterly unconscious as he looked. 'I am turned out to starve,' cried he aloud, as though there was a sense of relief in thus proclaiming his sorrow to the winds. 'I am told to go and work upon the roads, to live by my daily labour. Treated like a gentleman until I am bound to that condition by every tie of feeling and kindred, and then bade to know myself as an outcast.

I have not even Joe Atlee's resource—I have not imbibed the instincts of the lower orders, so as to be able to give them back to them in fiction or in song. I cannot either idealise rebellion or make treason tuneful.

'It is not yet a week since that same Atlee envied me my station as the son and heir to this place, and owned to me that there was that in the sense of name and lineage that more than balanced personal success, and here I am now, a beggar! I can enlist, however; blessings on the noble career that ignores character and defies capacity. I don't know that I'll bring much loyalty to Her Majesty's cause, but I'll lend her the aid of as broad shoulders and tough sinews as my neighbours.' And here his voice grew louder and harsher, and with a ring of defiance in it. 'And no cutting off the entail, my Lord Kilgobbin! no escape from that cruel necessity of an heir! I may carry my musket in the ranks, but I'll not surrender my birthright!'

The thought that he had at length determined on the path he should follow aroused his courage and made his heart lighter; and then there was that in the manner he was vindicating his station and his claim that seemed to savour of heroism. He began to fancy his comrades regarding him with a certain deference, and treating him with a respect that recognised his condition. 'I know the shame my father will feel when he sees to what he has driven me. What an offence to his love of rank and station to behold his son in the coarse uniform of a private! An only son and heir, too! I can picture to myself his shock as he reads the letter in which I shall say good-bye, and then turn to tell my sister that her brother is a common soldier, and in this way lost to her for ever!

'And what is all this about? What terrible things have I done? What entanglements have I contracted? Where have I forged? Whose name have I stolen? whose daughter seduced? What is laid to my charge, beyond that I have lived like a gentleman, and striven to eat and drink and dress like one. And I'll wager my life that for one who will blame him, there will be ten —no, not ten, fifty—to condemn me. I had a kind, trustful, affectionate father, restricting himself in scores of ways to give me my education among the highest class of my contemporaries. I was largely supplied with means, indulged in every way, and if I turned my steps towards home, welcomed with love and affection.'

'And fearfully spoiled by all the petting he met with,' said a soft voice leaning over his shoulder, while a pair of very liquid grey eyes gazed into his own.

'What, Nina!—Mademoiselle Nina, I mean,' said he, 'have you been long there?'

'Long enough to hear you make a very pitiful lamentation over a condition that I, in my ignorance, used to believe was only a little short of Paradise.'

'You fancied that, did you?'

'Yes, I did so fancy it.'

'Might I be bold enough to ask from what circumstance, though? I entreat you to tell me, what belongings of mine, what resources of luxury or pleasure, what incident of my daily life, suggested this impression of yours?'

'Perhaps, as a matter of strict reasoning, I have little to show for my conviction, but if you ask me why I thought as I did, it was simply from contrasting your condition with my own, and seeing that in everything where my lot has gloom and darkness, if not worse, yours, my ungrateful cousin, was all sunshine.'

'Let us see a little of this sunshine, Cousin Nina. Sit down here beside me, and show me, I pray, some of those bright tints that I am longing to gaze on.'

'There's not room for both of us on that bench.'

'Ample room; we shall sit the closer.'

'No, Cousin Dick; give me your arm and we'll take a stroll together.'

'Which way shall it be?'

'You shall choose, cousin.'

'If I have the choice, then, I'll carry you off, Nina, for I'm thinking of bidding good-bye to the old house and all within it.'

'I don't think I'll consent that far,' said she, smiling. 'I have had my experience of what it is to be without a home, or something very nearly that. I'll not willingly recall the sensation. But what has put such gloomy thoughts in your head? What, or rather who, is driving you to this?'

'My father, Nina, my father!'

'This is past my comprehending.'

'I'll make it very intelligible. My father, by way of curbing my extravagance, tells me I must give up all pretension to the life of a gentleman, and go into an office as a clerk. I refuse. He insists, and tells me, moreover, a number of little pleasant traits of my unfitness to do anything, so that I interrupt him by hinting that I might possibly break stones on the highway. He seizes the project with avidity, and offers to supply me with a hammer for my work. All fact, on my honour! I am neither adding to nor concealing. I am relating what occurred little more than an hour ago, and I have forgotten nothing of the inter-

view. He, as I said, offers to give me a stone-hammer. And now I ask you, is it for me to accept this generous offer, or would it be better to wander over that bog yonder, and take my chance of a deep pool, or the bleak world where immersion and death are just as sure, though a little slower in coming?'

'Have you told Kate of this?'

'No, I have not seen her. I don't know, if I had seen her, that I should have told her. Kate has so grown to believe all my father's caprices to be absolute wisdom, that even his sudden gusts of passion seem to her like flashes of a bright intelligence, too quick and too brilliant for mere reason. She could give me no comfort nor counsel either.'

'I am not of your mind,' said she slowly. 'She has the great gift of what people so mistakingly call *common* sense.'

'And she'd recommend me, perhaps, not to quarrel with my father, and to go and break the stones.'

'Were you ever in love, Cousin Dick?' asked she, in a tone every accent of which betokened earnestness and even gravity.

'Perhaps I might say never. I have spooned or flirted or whatever the name of it might be, but I was never seriously attached to one girl, and unable to think of anything but her. But what has your question to do with this?'

'Everything. If you really loved a girl—that is, if she filled every corner of your heart, if she was first in every plan and project of your life, not alone her wishes and her likings, but her very words and the sound of her voice—if you saw her in everything that was beautiful, and heard her in every tone that delighted you—if to be moving in the air she breathed was ecstasy, and that heaven itself without her was cheerless—if——'

'Oh, don't go on, Nina. None of these ecstasies could ever be mine. I have no nature to be moved or moulded in this fashion. I might be very fond of a girl, but she'd never drive me mad if she left me for another.'

'I hope she may, then, if it be with such false money you would buy her,' said she fiercely. 'Do you know,' added she, after a pause, 'I was almost on the verge of saying, go and break the stones; the *métier* is not much beneath you, after all!'

'This is scarcely civil, mademoiselle; see what my candour has brought upon me!'

'Be as candid as you like upon the faults of your nature. Tell every wickedness that you have done or dreamed of, but don't own to cold-heartedness. For *that* there is no sympathy!'

'Let us go back a bit, then,' said he, 'and let us suppose that

I did love in the same fervent and insane manner you spoke of, what and how would it help me here?'

'Of course it would. Of all the ingenuity that plotters talk of, of all the imagination that poets dream, there is nothing to compare with love. To gain a plodding subsistence a man will do much. To win the girl he loves, to make her his own, he will do everything: he will strive, and strain, and even starve to win her. Poverty will have nothing mean if confronted for her, hardship have no suffering if endured for her sake. With her before him, all the world shows but one goal; without her, life is a mere dreary task, and himself a hired labourer.'

'I confess, after all this, that I don't see how breaking stones would be more palatable to me because some pretty girl that I was fond of saw me hammering away at my limestone!'

'If you could have loved as I would wish you to love, your career had never fallen to this. The heart that loved would have stimulated the head that thought. Don't fancy that people are only better because they are in love, but they are greater, bolder, brighter, more daring in danger, and more ready in every emergency. So wonder-working is the real passion that even in the base mockery of Love men have risen to genius. Look what it made Petrarch, and I might say Byron too, though he never loved worthy of the name.'

'And how came you to know all this, cousin mine? I'm really curious to know that.'

'I was reared in Italy, Cousin Dick, and I have made a deep study of nature through French novels.'

Now there was a laughing devilry in her eye as she said this that terribly puzzled the young fellow, for just at the very moment her enthusiasm had begun to stir his breast, her merry mockery wafted it away as with a storm-wind.

'I wish I knew if you were serious,' said he gravely.

'Just as serious as you were when you spoke of being ruined.'

'I was so, I pledge my honour. The conversation I reported to you really took place; and when you joined me, I was gravely deliberating with myself whether I should take a header into a deep pool or enlist as a soldier.'

'Fie, fie! how ignoble all that is. You don't know the hundreds of thousands of things one can do in life. Do you speak French or Italian?'

'I can read them, but not freely; but how are they to help me?'

'You shall see: first of all, let me be your tutor. We shall take two hours, three if you like, every morning. Are you free now from all your college studies?'

'I can be after Wednesday next. I ought to go up for my term examination.'

'Well, do so; but mind, don't bring down Mr. Atlee with you.'

'My chum is no favourite of yours?'

'That's as it may be,' said she haughtily. 'I have only said let us not have the embarrassment, or, if you like it, the pleasure of his company. I'll give you a list of books to bring down, and my life be on it, but *my* course of study will surpass what you have been doing at Trinity. Is it agreed?'

'Give me till to-morrow to think of it, Nina.'

'That does not sound like a very warm acceptance; but be it so: till to-morrow.'

'Here are some of Kate's dogs,' cried he angrily. 'Down, Fan, down! I say. I'll leave you now before she joins us. Mind, not a word of what I told you.'

And, without another word, he sprang over a low fence, and speedily disappeared in the copse beyond it.

'Wasn't that Dick I saw making his escape?' cried Kate, as she came up.

'Yes, we were taking a walk together, and he left me very abruptly.'

'I wish I had not spoiled a *tête-à-tête*,' said Kate merrily.

'It is no great mischief: we can always renew it.'

'Dear Nina,' said the other caressingly, as she drew her arm around her—'dear, dear Nina, do not, do not, I beseech you.'

'Don't what, child?—you must not speak in riddles.'

'Don't make that poor boy in love with you. You yourself told me you could save him from it if you liked.'

'And so I shall, Kate, if you don't dictate or order me. Leave me quite to myself, and I shall be most merciful.'

CHAPTER XVIII

MATHEW KEARNEY'S 'STUDY'

Had Mathew Kearney but read the second sheet of his correspondent's letter, it is more than likely that Dick had not taken such a gloomy view of his condition. Mr. M'Keown's epistle continued in this fashion: 'That ought to do for him, Mathew, or my name ain't Tom M'Keown. It is not that he is any worse or better than other young fellows of his own stamp, but he has the greatest scamp in Christendom for his daily associate. Atlee is deep in all the mischief that goes on in the National press. I

believe he is a head-centre of the Fenians, aud I know he has a correspondence with the French socialists, and that Rights-of-labour-knot of vagabonds who meet at Geneva. Your boy is not too wise to keep himself out of these scrapes, and he is just, by name and station, of consequence enough to make these fellows make up to and flatter him. Give him a sound fright, then, and when he is thoroughly alarmed about his failure, send him abroad for a short tour, let him go study at Halle or Heidelberg—anything, in short, that will take him away from Ireland, and break off his intimacy with this Atlee and his companions. While he is with you at Kilgobbin, don't let him make acquaintance with those Radical fellows in the county towns. Keep him down, Mathew, keep him down; and if you find that you cannot do this, make him believe that you'll be one day lords of Kilgobbin, and the more he has to lose the more reluctant he'll be to risk it. If he'd take to farming, and marry some decent girl, even a little beneath him in life, it would save you all uneasiness; but he is just that thing now that brings all the misery on us in Ireland. He thinks he's a gentleman because he can do nothing; and to save himself from the disgrace of incapacity, 'he'd like to be a rebel.'

If Mr. Tom M'Keown's reasonings were at times somewhat abstruse and hard of comprehension to his friend Kearney, it was not that he did not bestow on them due thought and reflection; and over this private and strictly confidential page he had now meditated for hours.

'Bad luck to me,' cried he at last, 'if I see what he's at. If I'm to tell the boy he is ruined to-day, and to-morrow to announce to him that he is a lord—if I'm to threaten him now with poverty, and the morning after I'm to send him to Halle, or Hell, or wherever it is—I'll soon be out of my mind myself through bare confusion. As to having him "down," he's low enough; but so shall I be too, if I keep him there. I'm not used to seeing my house uncomfortable, and I cannot bear it.'

Such were some of his reflections over his agent's advice; and it may be imagined that the Machiavellian Mr. M'Keown had fallen upon a very inapt pupil.

It must be owned that Mathew Kearney was somewhat out of temper with his son even before the arrival of this letter. While the 'swells,' as he would persist in calling the two English visitors, were there, Dick took no trouble about them, nor to all seeming made any impression on them. As Mathew said, 'He let Joe Atlee make all the running, and, signs on it! Joe Atlee was taken off to town as Walpole's companion, and Dick not so

much as thought of. Joe, too, did the honours of the house as if it was his own, and talked to Lockwood about coming down for the partridge-shooting as if he was the head of the family. The fellow was a bad lot, and M'Keown was right so far—the less Dick saw of him the better.'

The trouble and distress these reflections, and others like them, cost him would more than have recompensed Dick, had he been hard-hearted enough to desire a vengeance. 'For a quarter of an hour, or maybe twenty minutes,' said he, 'I can be as angry as any man in Europe, and, if it was required of me during that time to do anything desperate—downright wicked—I could be bound to do it; and what's more, I'd stand to it afterwards if it cost me the gallows. But as for keeping up the same mind, as for being able to say to myself my heart is as hard as ever, I'm just as much bent on cruelty as I was yesterday—that's clean beyond me; and the reason, God help me, is no great comfort to me after all—for it's just this: that when I do a hard thing, whether distraining a creature out of his bit of ground, selling a widow's pig, or fining a fellow for shooting a hare, I lose my appetite and have no heart for my meals; and as sure as I go asleep, I dream of all the misfortunes in life happening to me, and my guardian angel sitting laughing all the while and saying to me, "Didn't you bring it on yourself, Mathew Kearney? couldn't you bear a little rub without trying to make a calamity of it? Must somebody be always punished when anything goes wrong in life? Make up your mind to have six troubles every day of your life, and see how jolly you'll be the day you can only count five, or maybe four."'

As Mr. Kearney sat brooding in this wise, Peter Gill made his entrance into the study with the formidable monthly lists and accounts, whose examination constituted a veritable doomsday to the unhappy master.

'Wouldn't next Saturday do, Peter?' asked Kearney, in a tone of almost entreaty.

'I'm afther ye since Tuesday last, and I don't think I'll be able to go on much longer.'

Now as Mr. Gill meant by this speech to imply that he was obliged to trust entirely to his memory for all the details which would have been committed to writing by others, and to a notched stick for the manifold dates of a vast variety of events, it was not really a very unfair request he had made for a peremptory hearing.

'I vow to the Lord,' sighed out Kearney, 'I believe I'm the hardest-worked man in the three kingdoms.'

'Maybe you are,' muttered Gill, though certainly the concurrence scarcely sounded hearty, while he meanwhile arranged the books.

'Oh, I know well enough what you mean. If a man doesn't work with a spade or follow the plough, you won't believe that he works at all. He must drive, or dig, or drain, or mow. There's no labour but what strains a man's back, and makes him weary about the loins; but I'll tell you, Peter Gill, that it's here'—and he touched his forehead with his finger—'it's here is the real workshop. It's thinking and contriving; setting this against that; doing one thing that another may happen, and guessing what will come if we do this and don't do that; carrying everything in your brain, and, whether you are sitting over a glass with a friend or taking a nap after dinner, thinking away all the time! What would you call that, Peter Gill—what would you call that?'

'Madness, begorra, or mighty near it!'

'No; it's just work—brain-work. As much above mere manual labour as the intellect, the faculty that raises us above the brutes, is above the—the——'

'Yes,' said Gill, opening the large volume and vaguely passing his hand over a page. 'It's somewhere there about the Conacre!'

'You're little better than a beast!' said Kearney angrily.

'Maybe I am, and maybe I'm not. Let us finish this, now that we're about it.'

And so saying, he deposited his other books and papers on the table, and then drew from his breast-pocket a somewhat thick roll of exceedingly dirty bank-notes, fastened with a leather thong.

'I'm glad to see some money at last, Peter,' cried Kearney, as his eye caught sight of the notes.

'Faix, then, it's little good they'll do ye,' muttered the other gruffly.

'What d'ye mean by that, sir?' asked he angrily.

'Just what I said, my lord, the devil a more nor less, and that the money you see here is no more yours nor it is mine! It belongs to the land it came from. Ay, ay, stamp away, and go red in the face: you must hear the truth, whether you like it or no. The place we're living in is going to rack and ruin out of sheer bad treatment. There's not a hedge on the estate; there isn't a gate that could be called a gate; the holes the people live in isn't good enough for badgers; there's no water for the mill at the crossroads; and the Loch meadows is drowned with wet—we're dragging for the hay, like seaweed! And you think you've a right to these'—and he actually shook the notes at him—'to

go and squander them on them "impedint" Englishmen that was laughing at you! Didn't I hear them myself about the tablecloth that one said was the sail of a boat.'

'Will you hold your tongue?' cried Kearney, wild with passion.

'I will not! I'll die on the floore but I'll speak my mind.'

This was not only a favourite phrase of Mr. Gill's, but it was so far significant that it always indicated he was about to give notice to leave—a menace on his part of no unfrequent occurrence.

'Ye's going, are ye?' asked Kearney jeeringly.

'I just am; and I'm come to give up the books, and to get my receipts and my charac—ter.'

'It won't be hard to give the last, anyway,' said Kearney, with a grin.

'So much the better. It will save your honour much writing, with all that you have to do.'

'Do you want me to kick you out of the office, Peter Gill?'

'No, my lord, I'm going quiet and peaceable. I'm only asking my rights.'

'You're bidding hard to be kicked out, you are.'

'Am I to leave them here, or will your honour go over the books with me?'

'Leave the notes, sir, and go to the devil.'

'I will, my lord; and one comfort at least I'll have—it won't be harder to put up with his temper.'

Mr. Gill's head barely escaped the heavy account-book which struck the door above him as he escaped from the room, and Mathew Kearney sat back in his chair and grasped the arms of it like one threatened with a fit.

'Where's Miss Kitty—where's my daughter?' cried he aloud, as though there was some one within hearing. 'Taking the dogs a walk, I'll be bound,' muttered he, 'or going to see somebody's child with the measles, devil fear her! She has plenty on her hands to do anywhere but at home. The place might be going to rack and ruin for her if there was only a young colt to look at, or a new litter of pigs! And so you think to frighten me, Peter Gill! You've been doing the same thing every Easter, and every harvest, these five-and-twenty years! I can only say I wish you had kept your threat long ago, and the property wouldn't have as many tumble-down cabins and ruined fences as it has now, and my rent-roll, too, wouldn't have been the worse. I don't believe there's a man in Ireland more cruelly robbed than myself. There isn't an estate in the county has not risen in value except my own! There's not a landed gentleman hasn't laid by money in the barony but myself, and if you were to believe the newspapers,

I'm the hardest landlord in the province of Leinster. Is that Mickey Doolan there? Mickey!' cried he, opening the window, 'did you see Miss Kearney anywhere about?'

'Yes, my lord. I see her coming up the Bog road with Miss O'Shea.'

'The worse luck mine!' muttered he, as he closed the window, and leaned his head on his hand.

CHAPTER XIX

AN UNWELCOME VISIT

If Mathew Kearney had been put to the question, he could not have concealed the fact that the human being he most feared and dreaded in life was his neighbour Miss Betty O'Shea.

With two years of seniority over him, Miss Betty had bullied him as a child, snubbed him as a youth, and opposed and sneered at him ever after; and to such an extent did her influence over his character extend, according to his own belief, that there was not a single good trait of his nature she had not thwarted by ridicule, nor a single evil temptation to which he had yielded that had not come out of sheer opposition to that lady's dictation.

Malevolent people, indeed, had said that Mathew Kearney had once had matrimonial designs on Miss Betty, or rather, on that snug place and nice property called 'O'Shea's Barn,' of which she was sole heiress; but he most stoutly declared this story to be groundless, and in a forcible manner asseverated that had he been Robinson Crusoe and Miss Betty the only inhabitant of the island with him, he would have lived and died in celibacy.

Miss Betty, to give her the name by which she was best known, was no miracle of either tact or amiability, but she had certain qualities that could not be disparaged. She was a strict Catholic, charitable, in her own peculiar and imperious way, to the poor, very desirous to be strictly just and honest, and such a sure foe to everything that she thought pretension or humbug of any kind—which meant anything that did not square with her own habits—that she was perfectly intolerable to all who did not accept herself and her own mode of life as a model and an example.

Thus, a stout-bodied copper urn on the tea-table, a very uncouth jaunting-car, driven by an old man, whose only livery was a cockade, some very muddy port as a dinner wine, and whisky-punch afterwards on the brown mahogany, were so many

articles of belief with her, to dissent from any of which was a downright heresy.

Thus, after Nina arrived at the castle, the appearance of napkins palpably affected her constitution; with the advent of finger-glasses she ceased her visits, and bluntly declined all invitations to dinner. That coffee and some indescribable liberties would follow, as postprandial excesses, she secretly imparted to Kate Kearney in a note, which concluded with the assurance that when the day of these enormities arrived, O'Shea's Barn would be open to her as a refuge and a sanctuary; 'but not,' added she, 'with your cousin, for I'll not let the hussy cross my doors.'

For months now this strict quarantine had lasted, and except for the interchange of some brief and very uninteresting notes, all intimacy had ceased between the two houses—a circumstance, I am loth to own, which was most ungallantly recorded every day after dinner by old Kearney, who drank 'Miss Betty's health, and long absence to her.' It was then with no small astonishment Kate was overtaken in the avenue by Miss Betty on her old chestnut mare Judy, a small bog-boy mounted on the croup behind to act as groom; for in this way Paddy Walshe was accustomed to travel, without the slightest consciousness that he was not in strict conformity with the ways of Rotten Row and the 'Bois.'

That there was nothing 'stuck-up' or pretentious about this mode of being accompanied by one's groom—a proposition scarcely assailable—was Miss Betty's declaration, delivered in a sort of challenge to the world. Indeed, certain ticklesome tendencies in Judy, particularly when touched with the heel, seemed to offer the strongest protest against the practice; for whenever pushed to any increase of speed or admonished in any way, the beast usually responded by a hoist of the haunches, which invariably compelled Paddy to clasp his mistress round the waist for safety —a situation which, however repugnant to maiden bashfulness, time, and perhaps necessity, had reconciled her to. At all events, poor Paddy's terror would have been the amplest refutation of scandal, while the stern immobility of Miss Betty during the embrace would have silenced even malevolence.

On the present occasion, a sharp canter of several miles had reduced Judy to a very quiet and decorous pace, so that Paddy and his mistress sat almost back to back—a combination that only long habit enabled Kate to witness without laughing.

'Are you alone up at the castle, dear?' asked Miss Betty, as she rode along at her side; 'or have you the house full of what the papers call "distinguished company"?'

'We are quite alone, godmother. My brother is with us, but we have no strangers.'

'I am glad of it. I've come over to "have it out" with your father, and it's pleasant to know we shall be to ourselves.'

Now, as this announcement of having 'it out' conveyed to Kate's mind nothing short of an open declaration of war, a day of reckoning on which Miss O'Shea would come prepared with a full indictment, and a resolution to prosecute to conviction, the poor girl shuddered at a prospect so certain to end in calamity.

'Papa is very far from well, godmother,' said she, in a mild way.

'So they tell me in the town,' said the other snappishly. 'His brother magistrates said that the day he came in, about that supposed attack—the memorable search for arms——'

'Supposed attack! but, godmother, pray don't imagine we had invented all that. I think you know me well enough and long enough to know——'

'To know that you would not have had a young scamp of a Castle aide-de-camp on a visit during your father's absence, not to say anything about amusing your English visitor by shooting down your own tenantry.'

'Will you listen to me for five minutes?'

'No, not for three.'

'Two, then—one even—one minute, godmother, will convince you how you wrong me.'

'I won't give you that. I didn't come over about you nor your affairs. When the father makes a fool of himself, why wouldn't the daughter? The whole country is laughing at him. His lordship indeed! a ruined estate and a tenantry in rags; and the only remedy, as Peter Gill tells me, raising the rents—raising the rents where every one is a pauper.'

'What would you have him do, Miss O'Shea?' said Kate, almost angrily.

'I'll tell you what I'd have him do. I'd have him rise of a morning before nine o'clock, and be out with his labourers at daybreak. I'd have him reform a whole lazy household of blackguards, good for nothing but waste and wickedness. I'd have him apprentice your brother to a decent trade or a light business. I'd have him declare he'd kick the first man that called him "My lord"; and for yourself, well, it's no matter——'

'Yes, but it is, godmother, a great matter to me at least. What about myself?'

'Well, I don't wish to speak of it, but it just dropped out of my lips by accident; and perhaps, though not pleasant to talk

about, it's as well it was said and done with. I meant to tell your father that it must be all over between you and my nephew Gorman; that I won't have him back here on leave as I intended. I know it didn't go far, dear. There was none of what they call love in the case. You would probably have liked one another well enough at last; but I won't have it, and it's better we came to the right understanding at once.'

'Your curb-chain is loose, godmother,' said the girl, who now, pale as death and trembling all over, advanced to fasten the link.

'I declare to the Lord, he's asleep!' said Miss Betty, as the wearied head of her page dropped heavily on her shoulder. 'Take the curb off, dear, or I may lose it. Put it in your pocket for me, Kate; that is, if you wear a pocket.'

'Of course I do, godmother. I carry very stout keys in it, too. Look at these.'

'Ay, ay. I liked all that, once on a time, well enough, and used to think you'd be a good thrifty wife for a poor man; but with the viscount your father, and the young princess your first cousin, and the devil knows what of your fine brother, I believe the sooner we part good friends the better. Not but if you like my plan for you, I'll be just as ready as ever to aid you.'

'I have not heard the plan yet,' said Kate faintly.

'Just a nunnery, then—no more nor less than that. The "Sacred Heart" at Namur, or the Sisters of Mercy here at home in Bagot Street, I believe, if you like better—eh?'

'It is soon to be able to make up one's mind on such a point. I want a little time for this, godmother.'

'You would not want time if your heart were in a holy work, Kate Kearney. It's little time you'd be asking if I said, will you have Gorman O'Shea for a husband?'

'There is such a thing as insult, Miss O'Shea, and no amount of long intimacy can license that.'

'I ask your pardon, godchild. I wish you could know how sorry I feel.'

'Say no more, godmother, say no more, I beseech you,' cried Kate, and her tears now gushed forth, and relieved her almost bursting heart. 'I'll take this short path through the shrubbery, and be at the door before you,' cried she, rushing away; while Miss Betty, with a sharp touch of the spur, provoked such a plunge as effectually awoke Paddy, and apprised him that his duties as groom were soon to be in request.

While earnestly assuring him that some changes in his diet should be speedily adopted against somnolency, Miss Betty rode briskly on, and reached the hall door.

'I told you I should be first, godmother,' said the girl; and the pleasant ring of her voice showed she had regained her spirits, or at least such self-control as enabled her to suppress her sorrow.

CHAPTER XX

A DOMESTIC DISCUSSION

It is a not infrequent distress in small households, especially when some miles from a market-town, to make adequate preparation for an unexpected guest at dinner; but even this is a very inferior difficulty to that experienced by those who have to order the repast in conformity with certain rigid notions of a guest who will criticise the smallest deviation from the most humble standard, and actually rebuke the slightest pretension to delicacy of food or elegance of table-equipage.

No sooner, then, had Kate learned that Miss O'Shea was to remain for dinner, than she immediately set herself to think over all the possible reductions that might be made in the fare, and all the plainness and simplicity that could be imparted to the service of the meal.

Napkins had not been the sole reform suggested by the Greek cousin. She had introduced flowers on the table, and so artfully had she decked out the board with fruit and ornamental plants, that she had succeeded in effecting by artifice what would have been an egregious failure if more openly attempted—the service of the dishes one by one to the guests without any being placed on the table. These, with finger-glasses, she had already achieved, nor had she in the recesses of her heart given up the hope of seeing the day that her uncle would rise from the table as she did, give her his arm to the drawing-room, and bow profoundly as he left her. Of the inestimable advantages, social, intellectual, and moral, of this system, she had indeed been cautious to hold forth; for, like a great reformer, she was satisfied to leave her improvements to the slow test of time, 'educating her public,' as a great authority has called it, while she bided the result in patience.

Indeed, as poor Mathew Kearney was not to be indulged with the luxury of whisky-punch during his dinner, it was not easy to reply to his question, 'When am I to have my tumbler?' as though he evidently believed the aforesaid 'tumbler' was an institution that could not be abrogated or omitted altogether.

Coffee in the drawing-room was only a half-success so long as the gentlemen sat over their wine; and as for the daily cigarette Nina smoked with it, Kate, in her simplicity, believed it was only done as a sort of protest at being deserted by those unnatural protectors who preferred poteen to ladies.

It was therefore in no small perturbation of mind that Kate rushed to her cousin's room with the awful tidings that Miss Betty had arrived and intended to remain for dinner.

'Do you mean that odious woman with the boy and band-box behind her on horseback?' asked Nina superciliously.

'Yes, she always travels in that fashion; she is odd and eccentric in scores of things, but a fine-hearted, honest woman, generous to the poor, and true to her friends.'

'I don't care for her moral qualities, but I do bargain for a little outward decency, and some respect for the world's opinion.'

'You will like her, Nina, when you know her.'

'I shall profit by the warning. I'll take care not to know her.'

'She is one of the oldest, I believe the oldest, friend our family has in the world.'

'What a sad confession, child; but I have always deplored longevity.'

'Don't be supercilious or sarcastic, Nina, but help me with your own good sense and wise advice. She has not come over in the best of humours. She has, or fancies she has, some difference to settle with papa. They seldom meet without a quarrel, and I fear this occasion is to be no exception; so do aid me to get things over pleasantly, if it be possible.'

'She snubbed me the only time I met her. I tried to help her off with her bonnet, and, unfortunately, I displaced, if I did not actually remove, her wig, and she muttered something "about a rope-dancer not being a dexterous lady's-maid."'

'O Nina, surely you do not mean——'

'Not that I was exactly a rope-dancer, Kate, but I had on a Greek jacket that morning of blue velvet and gold, and a white skirt, and perhaps these had some memories of the circus for the old lady.'

'You are only jesting now, Nina.'

'Don't you know me well enough to know that I never jest when I think, or even suspect, I am injured?'

'Injured!'

'It's not the word I wanted, but it will do; I used it in its French sense.'

'You bear no malice, I'm sure?' said the other caressingly.

'No!' replied she, with a shrug that seemed to deprecate even having a thought about her.

'She will stay for dinner, and we must, as far as possible, receive her in the way she has been used to here, a very homely dinner, served as she has always seen it—no fruit or flowers on the table, no claret-cup, no finger-glasses.'

'I hope no tablecloth; couldn't we have a tray on a corner table, and every one help himself as he strolled about the room?'

'Dear Nina, be reasonable just for this once.'

'I'll come down just as I am, or, better still, I'll take down my hair and cram it into a net; I'd oblige her with dirty hands, if I only knew how to do it.'

'I see you only say these things in jest; you really do mean to help me through this difficulty.'

'But why a difficulty? what reason can you offer for all this absurd submission to the whims of a very tiresome old woman? Is she very rich, and do you expect an heritage?'

'No, no; nothing of the kind.'

'Does she load you with valuable presents? Is she ever ready to commemorate birthdays and family festivals?'

'No.'

'Has she any especial quality or gift beyond riding double and a bad temper? Oh, I was forgetting; she is the aunt of her nephew, isn't she?—the dashing lancer that was to spend his summer over here?'

'You were indeed forgetting when you said this,' said Kate proudly, and her face grew scarlet as she spoke.

'Tell me that you like him or that he likes you; tell me that there is something, anything, between you, child, and I'll be discreet and mannerly, too; and more, I'll behave to the old lady with every regard to one who holds such dear interests in her keeping. But don't bandage my eyes, and tell me at the same time to look out and see.'

'I have no confidences to make you,' said Kate coldly. 'I came here to ask a favour—a very small favour, after all—and you might have accorded it without question or ridicule.'

'But which you never need have asked, Kate,' said the other gravely. 'You are the mistress here; I am but a very humble guest. Your orders are obeyed, as they ought to be; my suggestions may be adopted now and then—partly in caprice, part compliment—but I know they have no permanence, no more take root here than—than myself.'

'Do not say that, my dearest Nina,' said Kate, as she threw

herself on her neck and kissed her affectionately again and again. 'You are one of us, and we are all proud of it. Come along with me, now, and tell me all that you advise. You know what I wish, and you will forgive me even in my stupidity.'

'Where's your brother?' asked Nina hastily.

'Gone out with his gun. He'll not be back till he is certain Miss Betty has taken her departure.'

'Why did he not offer to take me with him?'

'Over the bog, do you mean?'

'Anywhere; I'd not cavil about the road. Don't you know that I have days when "don't care" masters me—when I'd do anything, go anywhere——'

'Marry any one?' said the other, laughing.

'Yes, marry any one, as irresponsibly as if I was dealing with the destiny of some other that did not regard me. On these days I do not belong to myself, and this is one of them.'

'I know nothing of such humours, Nina; nor do I believe it a healthy mind that has them.'

'I did not boast of my mind's health, nor tell you to trust to it. Come, let us go down to the dinner-room, and talk that pleasant leg-of-mutton talk you know you are fond of.'

'And best fitted for, say that,' said Kate, laughing merrily.

The other did not seem to have heard her words, for she moved slowly away, calling on Kate to follow her.

CHAPTER XXI

A SMALL DINNER-PARTY

It is sad to have to record that all Kate's persuasions with her cousin, all her own earnest attempts at conciliation, and her ably-planned schemes to escape a difficulty, were only so much labour lost. A stern message from her father commanded her to make no change either in the house or the service of the dinner—an interference with domestic cares so novel on his part as to show that he had prepared himself for hostilities, and was resolved to meet his enemy boldly.

'It's no use, all I have been telling you, Nina,' said Kate, as she re-entered her room, later in the day. 'Papa orders me to have everything as usual, and won't even let me give Miss Betty an early dinner, though he knows she has nine miles of a ride to reach home.'

'That explains somewhat a message he has sent myself,' replied

Nina, 'to wear my very prettiest toilet and my Greek cap, which he admired so much the other day.'

'I am almost glad that *my* wardrobe has nothing attractive,' said Kate, half sadly. 'I certainly shall never be rebuked for my becomingness.'

'And do you mean to say that the old woman would be rude enough to extend her comments to *me*?'

'I have known her do things quite as hardy, though I hope on the present occasion the other novelties may shelter you.'

'Why isn't your brother here? I should insist on his coming down in discreet black, with a white tie and that look of imposing solemnity young Englishmen assume for dinner.'

'Dick guessed what was coming, and would not encounter it.'

'And yet you tell me you submit to all this for no earthly reason. She can leave you no legacy, contribute in no way to your benefit. She has neither family, fortune, nor connections; and, except her atrocious manners and her indomitable temper, there is not a trait of her that claims to be recorded.'

'Oh yes; she rides capitally to hounds, and hunts her own harriers to perfection.'

'I am glad she has one quality that deserves your favour.'

'She has others, too, which I like better than what they call accomplishments. She is very kind to the poor, never deterred by any sickness from visiting them, and has the same stout-hearted courage for every casualty in life.'

'A commendable gift for a squaw, but what does a gentle-woman want with this same courage?'

'Look out of the window, Nina, and see where you are living! Throw your eyes over that great expanse of dark bog, vast as one of the great campagnas you have often described to us, and bethink you how mere loneliness—desolation—needs a stout heart to bear it; how the simple fact that for the long hours of a summer's day, or the longer hours of a winter's night, a lone woman has to watch and think of all the possible casualties lives of hardship and misery may impel men to. Do you imagine that she does not mark the growing discontent of the people? see their careworn looks, dashed with a sullen determination, and hear in their voices the rising of a hoarse defiance that was never heard before? Does she not well know that every kindness she has bestowed, every merciful act she has ministered, would weigh for nothing in the balance on the day that she will be arraigned as a landowner—the receiver of the poor man's rent! And will you tell me after this she can dispense with courage?'

'*Bel paese davvero!*' muttered the other.

'So it is,' cried Kate; 'with all its faults I'd not exchange it for the brightest land that ever glittered in a southern sun. But why should I tell you how jarred and disconcerted we are by laws that have no reference to our ways—conferring rights where we were once contented with trustfulness, and teaching men to do everything by contract, and nothing by affection, nothing by good-will.'

'No, no, tell me none of all these; but tell me, shall I come down in my Suliote jacket of yellow cloth, for I know it becomes me?'

'And if we women had not courage,' went on Kate, not heeding the question, 'what would our men do? Should we see them lead lives of bolder daring than the stoutest wanderer in Africa?'

'And my jacket and my Theban belt?'

'Wear them all. Be as beautiful as you like, but don't be late for dinner.' And Kate hurried away before the other could speak.

When Miss O'Shea, arrayed in a scarlet poplin and a yellow gauze turban—the month being August—arrived in the drawing-room before dinner, she found no one there—a circumstance that chagrined her so far that she had hurried her toilet and torn one of her gloves in her haste. 'When they say six for the dinner-hour, they might surely be in the drawing-room by that hour,' was Miss Betty's reflection as she turned over some of the magazines and circulating-library books which since Nina's arrival had found their way to Kilgobbin. The contemptuous manner in which she treated *Blackwood* and *Macmillan*, and the indignant dash with which she flung Trollope's last novel down, showed that she had not been yet corrupted by the light reading of the age. An unopened country newspaper, addressed to the Viscount Kilgobbin, had however absorbed all her attention, and she was more than half disposed to possess herself of the envelope, when Mr. Kearney entered.

His bright blue coat and white waistcoat, a profusion of shirt-frill, and a voluminous cravat proclaimed dinner-dress, and a certain pomposity of manner showed how an unusual costume had imposed on himself, and suggested an important event.

'I hope I see Miss O'Shea in good health?' said he, advancing.

'How are you, Mathew?' replied she dryly. 'When I heard that big bell thundering away, I was so afraid to be late that I came down with one bracelet, and I have torn my glove too.'

'It was only the first bell—the dressing-bell,' he said.

'Humph! That's something new since I was here last,' said she tartly.

'You remind me of how long it is since you dined with us, Miss O'Shea.'

'Well, indeed, Mathew, I meant to be longer, if I must tell the truth. I saw enough the last day I lunched here to show me Kilgobbin was not what it used to be. You were all of you what my poor father—who was always thinking of the dogs—used to call "on your hind-legs," walking about very stately and very miserable. There were three or four covered dishes on the table that nobody tasted; and an old man in red breeches ran about in half-distraction, and said, "Sherry, my lord, or Madeira?" Many's the time I laughed over it since.' And, as though to vouch for the truth of the mirthfulness, she lay back in her chair and shook with hearty laughter.

Before Kearney could reply—for something like a passing apoplexy had arrested his words—the girls entered, and made their salutations.

'If I had the honour of knowing you longer, Miss Costigan,' said Miss O'Shea—for it was thus she translated the name Kostalergi—'I'd ask you why you couldn't dress like your cousin Kate. It may be all very well in the house, and it's safe enough here, there's no denying it; but my name's not Betty if you'd walk down Kilbeggan without a crowd yelling after you and calling names too, that a respectable young woman wouldn't bargain for; eh, Mathew, is that true?'

'There's the dinner-bell now,' said Mathew; 'may I offer my arm?'

'It's thin enough that arm is getting, Mathew Kearney,' said she, as he walked along at her side. 'Not but it's time, too. You were born in the September of 1809, though your mother used to deny it; and you're now a year older than your father was when he died.'

'Will you take this place?' said Kearney, placing her chair for her. 'We're a small party to-day. I see Dick does not dine with us.

'Maybe I hunted him away. The young gentlemen of the present day are frank enough to say what they think of old maids. That's very elegant, and I'm sure it's refined,' said she, pointing to the mass of fruit and flowers so tastefully arranged before her 'But I was born in a time when people liked to see what they were going to eat, Mathew Kearney, and as I don't intend to break my fast on a stockgilly-flower, or make a repast of raisins, I prefer the old way. Fill up my glass whenever it's empty,' said she to the servant, 'and don't bother me with the name of it. As long as I know the King's County, and that's more than fifty years, we've been calling Cape Madeira, Sherry!'

'If we know what we are drinking, Miss O'Shea, I don't suppose it matters much.'

'Nothing at all, Mathew. Calling you the Viscount Kilgobbin, as I read a while ago, won't confuse me about an old neighbour.'

'Won't you try a cutlet, godmother?' asked Kate hurriedly.

'Indeed I will, my dear. I don't know why I was sending the man away. I never saw this way of dining before, except at the poorhouse, where each poor creature has his plateful given him, and pockets what he can't eat.' And here she laughed long and heartily at the conceit.

Kearney's good-humour relished the absurdity, and he joined in the laugh, while Nina stared at the old woman as an object of dread and terror.

'And that boy that wouldn't dine with us. How is he turning out, Mathew? They tell me he's a bit of a scamp.'

'He's no such thing, godmother. Dick is as good a fellow and as right-minded as ever lived, and you yourself would be the first to say it if you saw him,' cried Kate angrily.

'So would the young lady yonder, if I might judge from her blushes,' said Miss Betty, looking at Nina. 'Not indeed but it's only now I'm remembering that you're not a boy. That little red cap and that thing you wear round your throat deceived me.'

'It is not the lot of every one to be so fortunate in a head-dress as Miss O'Shea,' said Nina, very calmly.

'If it's my wig you are envying me, my dear,' replied she quietly, 'there's nothing easier than to have the own brother of it. It was made by Crimp, of Nassau Street, and box and all cost four pound twelve.'

'Upon my life, Miss Betty,' broke in Kearney, 'you are tempting me to an extravagance.' And he passed his hand over his sparsely-covered head as he spoke.

'And I would not, if I was you, Mathew Kearney,' said she resolutely. 'They tell me that in that House of Lords you are going to, more than half of them are bald.'

There was no possible doubt that she meant by this speech to deliver a challenge, and Kate's look, at once imploring and sorrowful, appealed to her for mercy.

'No, thank you,' said Miss Betty to the servant who presented a dish, 'though, indeed, maybe I'm wrong, for I don't know what's coming.'

'This is the *menu*,' said Nina, handing a card to her.

'The bill of fare, godmother,' said Kate hastily.

'Well, indeed, it's a kindness to tell me, and if there is any more novelties to follow, perhaps you'll be kind enough to inform me, for I never dined in the Greek fashion before.'

'The Russian, I believe, madam, not the Greek,' said Nina.

'With all my heart, my dear. It's about the same, for whatever may happen to Mathew Kearney or myself, I don't suspect either of us will go to live at Moscow.'

'You'll not refuse a glass of port with your cheese?' said Kearney.

'Indeed I will, then, if there's any beer in the house, though perhaps it's too vulgar a liquor to ask for.'

While the beer was being brought, a solemn silence ensued, and a less comfortable party could not easily be imagined.

When the interval had been so far prolonged that Kearney himself saw the necessity to do something, he placed his napkin on the table, leaned forward with a half-motion of rising, and, addressing Miss Betty, said, 'Shall we adjourn to the drawing-room and take our coffee?'

'I'd rather stay where I am, Mathew Kearney, and have that glass of port you offered me a while ago, for the beer was flat. Not that I'll detain the young people, nor keep yourself away from them very long.'

When the two girls withdrew, Nina's look of insolent triumph at Kate betrayed the tone she was soon to take in treating of the old lady's good manners.

'You had a very sorry dinner, Miss Betty, but I can promise you an honest glass of wine,' said Kearney, filling her glass.

'It's very nice,' said she, sipping it, 'though, maybe, like myself, it's just a trifle too old.'

'A good fault, Miss Betty, a good fault.'

'For the wine, perhaps,' said she dryly, 'but maybe it would taste better if I had not bought it so dearly.'

'I don't think I understand you.'

'I was about to say that I have forfeited that young lady's esteem by the way I obtained it. She'll never forgive me, instead of retiring for my coffee, sitting here like a man—and a man of that old hard-drinking school, Mathew, that has brought all the ruin on Ireland.'

'Here's to their memory, anyway,' said Kearney, drinking off his glass.

'I'll drink no toasts nor sentiments, Mathew Kearney, and there's no artifice or roguery will make me forget I'm a woman and an O'Shea.'

'Faix, you'll not catch me forgetting either,' said Mathew,

with a droll twinkle of his eye, which it was just as fortunate escaped her notice.

'I doubted for a long time, Mathew Kearney, whether I'd come over myself, or whether I'd write you a letter; not that I'm good at writing, but, somehow, one can put their ideas more clear, and say things in a way that will fix them more in the mind; but at last I determined I'd come, though it's more than likely it's the last time Kilgobbin will see me here.'

'I sincerely trust you are mistaken, so far.'

'Well, Mathew, I'm not often mistaken! The woman that has managed an estate for more than forty years, been her own land-steward and her own law-agent, doesn't make a great many blunders; and, as I said before, if Mathew has no friend to tell him the truth among the men of his acquaintance, it's well that there is a woman to the fore, who has courage and good sense to go up and do it.'

She looked fixedly at him, as though expecting some concurrence in the remark, if not some intimation to proceed; but neither came and she continued.

'I suppose you don't read the Dublin newspapers?' said she civilly.

'I do, and every day the post brings them.'

'You see, therefore, without my telling you, what the world is saying about you. You see how they treat "the search for arms," as they head it, and "the Maid of Saragossa!" O Mathew Kearney! Mathew Kearney! whatever happened the old stock of the land, they never made themselves ridiculous.'

'Have you done, Miss Betty?' asked he, with assumed calm.

'Done! Why, it's only beginning I am,' cried she. 'Not but I'd bear a deal of blackguarding from the press—as the old woman said when the soldier threatened to run his bayonet through her: "Devil thank you, it's only your trade." But when we come to see the head of an old family making ducks and drakes of his family property, threatening the old tenants that have been on the land as long as his own people, raising the rent here, evicting there, distressing the people's minds when they've just as much as they can to bear up with—then it's time for an old friend and neighbour to give a timely warning, and cry "Stop."'

'Have you done, Miss Betty?' And now his voice was more stern than before.

'I have not, nor near done, Mathew Kearney. I've said nothing of the way you're bringing up your family—that son, in particular—to make him think himself a young man of fortune,

when you know, in your heart, you'll leave him little more than the mortgages on the estate. I have not told you that it's one of the jokes of the capital to call him the Honourable Dick Kearney, and to ask him after his father the viscount.'

'You haven't done yet, Miss O'Shea?' said he, now with a thickened voice.

'No, not yet,' replied she calmly—'not yet; for I'd like to remind you of the way you're behaving to the best of the whole of you—the only one, indeed, that's worth much in the family—your daughter Kate.'

'Well, what have I done to wrong *her*?' said he, carried beyond his prudence by so astounding a charge.

'The very worst you could do, Mathew Kearney; the only mischief it was in your power, maybe. Look at the companion you have given her! Look at the respectable young lady you've brought home to live with your decent child!'

'You'll not stop?' cried he, almost choking with passion.

'Not till I've told you why I came here, Mathew Kearney; for I'd beg you to understand it was no interest about yourself or your doings brought me. I came to tell you that I mean to be free about an old contract we once made—that I revoke it all. I was fool enough to believe that an alliance between our families would have made me entirely happy, and my nephew Gorman O'Shea was brought up to think the same. I have lived to know better, Mathew Kearney: I have lived to see that we don't suit each other at all, and I have come here to declare to you formally that it's all off. No nephew of mine shall come here for a wife. The heir to Shea's Barn shan't bring the mistress of it out of Kilgobbin Castle.'

'Trust *me* for that, old lady,' cried he, forgetting all his good manners in his violent passion.

'You'll be all the freer to catch a young aide-de-camp from the Castle,' said she sneeringly; 'or maybe, indeed, a young lord —a rank equal to your own.'

'Haven't you said enough?' screamed he, wild with rage.

'No, nor half, or you wouldn't be standing there, wringing your hands with passion and your hair bristling like a porcupine. You'd be at my feet, Mathew Kearney—ay, at my feet.'

'So I would, Miss Betty,' chimed he in, with a malicious grin, 'if I was only sure you'd be as cruel as the last time I knelt there. Oh dear! oh dear! and to think that I once wanted to marry that woman!'

'That you did! You'd have put your hand in the fire to win her.'

'By my conscience, I'd have put myself altogether there, if I had won her.'

'You understand now, sir,' said she haughtily, 'that there's no more between us.'

'Thank God for the same!' ejaculated he fervently.

'And that no nephew of mine comes courting a daughter of yours.'

'For his own sake, he'd better not.'

'It's for his own sake I intend it, Mathew Kearney. It's of himself I'm thinking. And now, thanking you for the pleasant evening I've passed, and your charming society, I'll take my leave.'

'I hope you'll not rob us of your company till you take a dish of tea,' said he, with well-feigned politeness.

'It's hard to tear one's self away, Mr. Kearney; but it's late already.'

'Couldn't we induce you to stop the night, Miss Betty?' asked he, in a tone of insinuation. 'Well, at least you'll let me ring to order your horse?'

'You may do that if it amuses you, Mathew Kearney; but, meanwhile, I'll just do what I've always done in the same place—I'll just go look for my own beast and see her saddled myself; and as Peter Gill is leaving you to-morrow, I'll take him back with me to-night.'

'Is he going to you?' cried he passionately.

'He's going to *me*, Mr. Kearney, with your leave, or without it, I don't know which I like best.' And with this she swept out of the room, while Kearney closed his eyes and lay back in his chair, stunned and almost stupefied.

CHAPTER XXII

A CONFIDENTIAL TALK

Dick Kearney walked the bog from early morning till dark without firing a shot. The snipe rose almost at his feet, and wheeling in circles through the air, dipped again into some dark crevice of the waste, unnoticed by him! One thought only possessed, and never left him, as he went. He had overheard Nina's words to his sister, as he made his escape over the fence, and learned how she promised to 'spare him'; and that if not worried about him, or asked to pledge herself, she should be 'merciful,' and not entangle the boy in a hopeless passion.

He would have liked to have scoffed at the insolence of this speech, and treated it as a trait of overweening vanity; he would have gladly accepted her pity as a sort of challenge, and said, 'Be it so; let us see who will come safest out of this encounter,' and yet he felt in his heart he could not.

First of all, her beauty had really dazzled him, and the thousand graces of a manner of which he had known nothing captivated and almost bewildered him. He could not reply to her in the same tone he used to any other. If he fetched her a book or a chair, he gave it with a sort of deference that actually reacted on himself, and made him more gentle and more courteous, for the time. 'What would this influence end in making me?' was his question to himself. 'Should I gain in sentiment or feeling? Should I have higher and nobler aims? Should I be anything of that she herself described so glowingly, or should I only sink to a weak desire to be her slave, and ask for nothing better than some slight recognition of my devotion? I take it that she would say the choice lay with *her*, and that I should be the one or the other as she willed it, and though I would give much to believe her wrong, my heart tells me that I cannot. I came down here resolved to resist any influence she might attempt to have over me. Her likeness showed me how beautiful she was, but it could not tell me the dangerous fascination of her low liquid voice, her half-playful, half-melancholy smile, and that bewitching walk, with all its stately grace, so that every fold as she moves sends its own thrill of ecstasy. And now that I know all these, see and feel them, I am told that to me they can bring no hope! That I am too poor, too ignoble, too undistinguished, to raise my eyes to such attraction. I am nothing, and must live and die nothing.

'She is candid enough, at all events. There is no rhapsody about her when she talks of poverty. She chronicles every stage of the misery, as though she had felt them all; and how unlike it she looks! There is an almost insolent well-being about her that puzzles me. She will not heed this, or suffer that, because it looks mean. Is this the subtle worship she offers Wealth, and is it thus she offers up her prayer to Fortune?

'But why should she assume I must be her slave?' cried he aloud, in a sort of defiance. 'I have shown her no such preference, nor made any advances that would show I want to win her favour. Without denying that she is beautiful, is it so certain it is the kind of beauty I admire? She has scores of fascinations—I do not deny it; but should I say that I trust her? And if I should trust her and love her too, where must it all end in? I

do not believe in her theory that love will transform a fellow of my mould into a hero, not to say that I have my own doubt if she herself believes it. I wonder if Kate reads her more clearly? Girls so often understand each other by traits we have no clue to; and it was Kate who asked her, almost in tone of entreaty, "to spare me," to save me from a hopeless passion, just as though I were some peasant-boy who had set his affection on a princess. Is that the way, then, the world would read our respective conditions? The son of a ruined house or the guest of a beggared family leaves little to choose between! Kate—the world—would call my lot the better of the two. The man's chance is not irretrievable, at least such is the theory. Those half-dozen fellows, who in a century or so contrive to work their way up to something, make a sort of precedent, and tell the others what they might be if they but knew how.

'I'm not vain enough to suppose I am one of these, and it is quite plain that she does not think me so.' He pondered long over this thought, and then suddenly cried aloud, 'Is it possible she may read Joe Atlee in this fashion? is that the stuff out of which she hopes to make a hero?' There was more bitterness in this thought than he had first imagined, and there was that of jealousy in it too that pained him deeply.

Had she preferred either of the two Englishmen to himself, he could have understood and, in a measure, accepted it. They were, as he called them, 'swells.' They might become, he knew not what. The career of the Saxon in fortune was a thing incommensurable by Irish ideas; but Joe was like himself, or in reality less than himself, in worldly advantages.

This pang of jealousy was very bitter; but still it served to stimulate him and rouse him from a depression that was gaining fast upon him. It is true, he remembered she had spoken slightingly of Joe Atlee. Called him noisy, pretentious, even vulgar; snubbed him openly on more than one occasion, and seemed to like to turn the laugh against him; but with all that she had sung duets with him, corrected some Italian verses he wrote, and actually made a little sketch in his note-book for him as a souvenir. A souvenir! and of what? Not of the ridicule she had turned upon him! not the jest she had made upon his boastfulness. Now which of these two did this argue: was this levity, or was it falsehood? Was she so little mindful of honesty that she would show these signs of favour to one she held most cheaply, or was it that her distaste to this man was mere pretence, and only assumed to deceive others.

After all, Joe Atlee was a nobody; flattery might call him an

adventurer, but he was not even so much. Amongst the men of the dangerous party he mixed with he was careful never to compromise himself. He might write the songs of rebellion, but he was little likely to tamper with treason itself. So much he would tell her when he got back. Not angrily, nor passionately, for that would betray him and disclose his jealousy, but in the tone of a man revealing something he regretted—confessing to the blemish of one he would have liked better to speak well of. There was not, he thought, anything unfair in this. He was but warning her against a man who was unworthy of her. Unworthy of her! What words could express the disparity between them? Not but if she liked him—and this he said with a certain bitterness—or thought she liked him, the disproportion already ceased to exist.

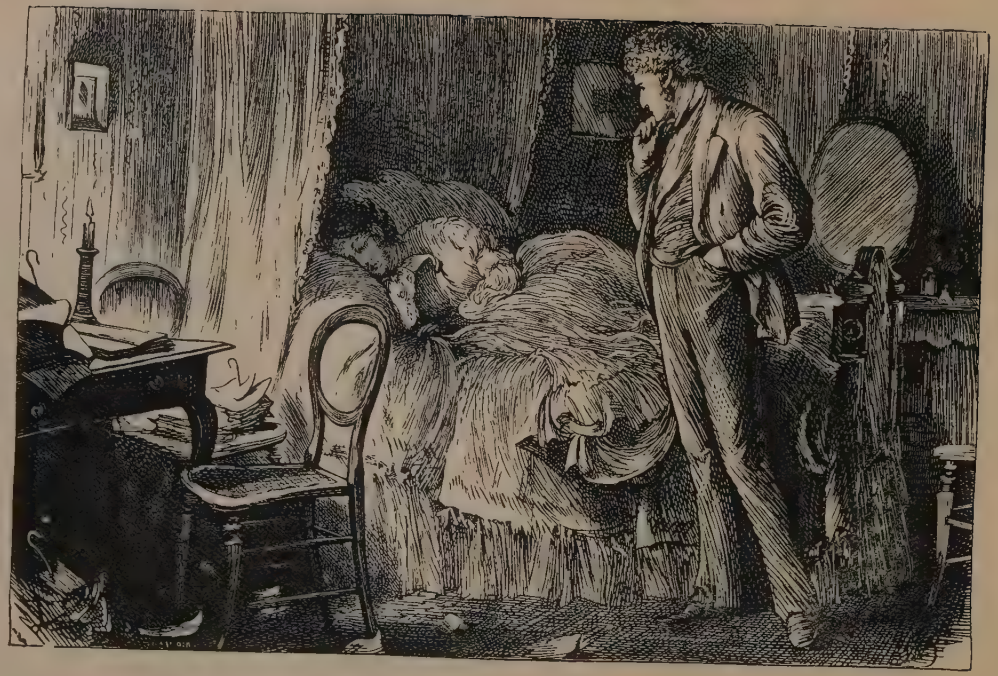
Hour after hour of that long summer day he walked, revolving such thoughts as these; all his conclusions tending to the one point, that *he* was not the easy victim she thought him, and that, come what might, *he* should not be offered up as a sacrifice to her worship of Joe Atlee.

'There is nothing would gratify the fellow's vanity,' thought he, 'like a successful rivalry of him! Tell him he was preferred to me, and he would be ready to fall down and worship whoever had made the choice.'

By dwelling on all the possible and impossible issues of such an attachment, he had at length convinced himself of its existence, and even more, persuaded himself to fancy it was something to be regretted and grieved over for worldly considerations, but not in any way regarded as personally unpleasant.

As he came in sight of home and saw a light in the small tower where Kate's bedroom lay, he determined he would go up to his sister and tell her so much of his mind as he believed was finally settled, and in such a way as would certainly lead her to repeat it to Nina.

'Kate shall tell her that if I have left her suddenly and gone back to Trinity to keep my term, I have not fled the field in a moment of faint-heartedness. I do not deny her beauty. I do not disparage one of her attractions, and she has scores of them. I will not even say that when I have sat beside her, heard her low soft voice, and watched the tremor of that lovely mouth vibrating with wit, or tremulous with feeling, I have been all indifference; but this I will say, she shall not number *me* amongst the victims of her fascinations; and when she counts the trinkets on her wrist that record the hearts she has broken—a pastime I once witnessed—not one of them shall record the initial of Dick Kearney.'



Kate, still dressed, had thrown herself on the bed, and was sound asleep.

With these brave words he mounted the narrow stair and knocked at his sister's door. No answer coming, he knocked again, and after waiting a few seconds, he slowly opened the door and saw that Kate, still dressed, had thrown herself on her bed, and was sound asleep. The table was covered with account-books and papers; tax-receipts, law-notices, and tenants' letters lay littered about, showing what had been the task she was last engaged on; and her heavy breathing told the exhaustion which it had left behind it.

'I wish I could help her with her work,' muttered he to himself, as a pang of self-reproach shot through him. This certainly should have been his own task rather than hers; the question was, however, Could he have done it? And this doubt increased as he looked over the long column of tenants' names, whose holdings varied in every imaginable quantity of acres, roods, and perches. Besides these there were innumerable small details of allowances for this and compensation for that. This one had given so many days' horse-and-car hire at the bog; that other had got advances 'in seed-potatoes'; such a one had a claim for reduced rent, because the mill-race had overflowed and deluged his wheat crop; such another had fed two pigs of 'the lord's' and fattened them, while himself and his own were nigh starving.

Through an entire column there was not one case without its complication, either in the shape of argument for increased liability or claim for compensation. It was makeshift everywhere, and Dick could not but ask himself whether any tenant on the estate really knew how far he was hopelessly in debt or a solvent man? It only needed Peter Gill's peculiar mode of collecting the moneys due, and recording the payment by the notched stick, to make the complication perfect; and there, indeed, upon the table, amid accounts and bills and sale warrants, lay the memorable bits of wood themselves, as that worthy steward had deposited them before quitting his master's service.

Peter's character, too, written out in Kate's hand, and only awaiting her father's signature, was on the table—the first intimation Dick Kearney had that old Gill had quitted his post.

'All this must have occurred to-day,' thought Dick; 'there were no evidences of these changes when I left this morning! Was it the backwater of my disgrace, I wonder, that has overwhelmed poor Gill?' thought he, 'or can I detect Miss Betty's fine Roman hand in this incident?'

In proportion to the little love he bore Miss O'Shea, were his convictions the stronger that she was the cause of all mischief.

She was one of those who took very 'utilitarian' notions of his own career, and he bore her small gratitude for the solicitude. There were short sentences in pencil along the margin of the chief book in Kate's handwriting which could not fail to strike him as he read them, indicating as they did her difficulty, if not utter incapacity, to deal with the condition of the estate. Thus :—

'There is no warranty for this concession. It cannot be continued.'—'The notice in this case was duly served, and Gill knows that it was to papa's generosity they were indebted for remaining.'—'These arrears have never been paid, on that point I am positive!'—'Malone's holding was not fairly measured, he has a just claim to compensation, and shall have it.'—'Hannigan's right to tenancy must not be disputed, but cannot be used as a precedent by others on the same part of the estate, and I will state why.'—'More of Peter Gill's conciliatory policy! The Regans, for having been twice in gaol, and once indicted, and nearly convicted of Ribbonism, have established a claim to live rent-free! This I will promise to rectify.'—'I shall make no more allowances for improvements without a guarantee, and a penalty besides on non-completion.'

And last of all came these ominous words :—

'It will thus be seen that our rent-roll since '64 has been progressively decreasing, and that we have only been able to supply our expenses by sales of property. Dick must be spoken to on this, and at once.'

Several entries had been already rubbed out, and it was clear that she had been occupied in the task of erasion on that very night. Poor girl! her sleep was the heavy repose of one utterly exhausted; and her closely clasped lips and corrugated brow showed in what frame of intense thought she had sunk to rest. He closed the book noiselessly, as he looked at her, replaced the various objects on the table, and rose to steal quietly away.

The accidental movement of a chair, however, startled her; she turned, and leaning on her elbow, she saw him as he tried to move away. 'Don't go, Dick, don't go. I'm awake, and quite fresh again. Is it late?'

'It's not far from one o'clock,' said he, half-roughly, to hide his emotion; for her worn and wearied features struck him now more forcibly than when she slept.

'And are you only returned now? How hungry you must be Poor fellow—have you dined to-day?'

'Yes; I got to Owen Molloy's as they were straining the potatoes, and sat down with them, and ate very heartily too.'

'Weren't they proud of it? Won't they tell how the young lord shared their meal with them?'

'I don't think they are as cordial as they used to be, Kate; they did not talk so openly, nor seem at their ease, as I once knew them. And they did one thing, significant enough in its way, that I did not like. They quoted the county newspaper twice or thrice when we talked of the land.'

'I am aware of that, Dick; they have got other counsellors than their landlords now,' said she mournfully, 'and it is our own fault if they have.'

'What, are you turning Nationalist, Kitty?' said he, laughing.

'I was always a Nationalist in one sense,' said she, 'and mean to continue so; but let us not get upon this theme. Do you know that Peter Gill has left us?'

'What, for America?'

'No; for "O'Shea's Barn." Miss Betty has taken him. She came here to-day to "have it out" with papa, as she said; and she has kept her word. Indeed, not alone with him, but with all of us—even Nina did not escape.'

'Insufferable old woman. What did she dare to say to Nina?'

'She got off the cheapest of us all, Dick,' said she, laughing. 'It was only some stupid remark she made her about looking like a boy, or being dressed like a rope-dancer. A small civility of this sort was her share of the general attention.'

'And how did Nina take the insolence?'

'With great good-temper, or good-breeding. I don't know exactly which covered the indifference she displayed, till Miss Betty, when taking her leave, renewed the impertinence in the hall, by saying something about the triumphant success such a costume would achieve in the circus, when Nina curtsied, and said: "I am charmed to hear you say so, madam, and shall wear it for my benefit; and if I could only secure the appearance of yourself and your little groom, my triumph would be, indeed, complete." I did not dare to wait for more, but hurried out to affect to busy myself with the saddle, and pretend that it was not tightly girthed.'

'I'd have given twenty pounds, if I had it, to have seen the old woman's face. No one ever ventured before to pay her back with her own money.'

'But I give you such a wrong version of it, Dick. I only convey the coarseness of the rejoinder, and I can give you no idea of the ineffable grace and delicacy which made her words sound like a humble apology. Her eyelids drooped as she curtsied, and

when she looked up again, in a way that seemed humility itself, to have reproved her would have appeared downright cruelty.'

'She is a finished coquette,' said he bitterly; 'a finished coquette.'

Kate made no answer, though he evidently expected one; and after waiting a while, he went on: 'Not but her high accomplishments are clean thrown away in such a place as this, and amongst such people. What chance of fitting exercise have they with my father or myself? Or is it on Joe Atlee she would try the range of her artillery?'

'Not so very impossible this, after all,' muttered Kate quietly.

'What, and is it to *that* her high ambitions tend? Is *he* the prize she would strive to win?'

'I can be no guide to you in this matter, Dick. She makes no confidences with me, and of myself I see nothing.'

'You have, however, some influence over her.'

'No; not much.'

'I did not say much; but enough to induce her to yield to a strong entreaty, as when, for instance, you implored her to spare your brother—that poor fellow about to fall so hopelessly in love——'

'I 'm not sure that my request did not come too late after all,' said she, with a laughing malice in her eye.

'Don't be too sure of that,' retorted he, almost fiercely.

'Oh, I never bargained for what you might do in a moment of passion or resentment.'

'There is neither one nor the other here. I am perfectly cool, calm, and collected, and I tell you this, that whoever your pretty Greek friend is to make a fool of, it shall not be Dick Kearney.'

'It might be very nice fooling, all the same, Dick.'

'I know—that is, I believe I know—what you mean. You have listened to some of those high heroics she ascends to in showing what the exaltation of a great passion can make of any man who has a breast capable of the emotion, and you want to see the experiment tried in its least favourable conditions—on a cold, soulless, selfish fellow of my own order; but, take my word for it, Kate, it would prove a sheer loss of time to us both. Whatever she might make of me, it would not be a *hero*; and whatever I should strive for, it would not be her *love*.'

'I don't think I 'd say that if I were a man.'

He made no answer to these words, but arose and walked the room with hasty steps. 'It was not about these things I came here to talk to you, Kitty,' said he earnestly. 'I had my head full of other things, and now I cannot remember them. Only

one occurs to me. Have you got any money? I mean a mere trifle—enough to pay my fare to town?'

'To be sure I have that much, Dick; but you are surely not going to leave us?'

'Yes. I suddenly remembered I must be up for the last day of term in Trinity. Knocking about here—I'll scarcely say amusing myself—I had forgotten all about it. Atlee used to jog my memory on these things when he was near me, and now, being away, I have contrived to let the whole escape me. You can help me, however, with a few pounds?'

'I have got five of my own, Dick; but if you want more——'

'No, no; I'll borrow the five of your own, and don't blend it with more, or I may cease to regard it as a debt of honour.'

'And if you should, my poor dear Dick——'

'I'd be only pretty much what I have ever been, but scarcely wish to be any longer,' and he added the last words in a whisper. 'It's only to be a brief absence, Kitty,' said he, kissing her; 'so say good-bye for me to the others, and that I shall be soon back again.'

'Shall I kiss Nina for you, Dick?'

'Do; and tell her that I gave you the same commission for Miss O'Shea, and was grieved that both should have been done by deputy!'

And with this he hurried away.

CHAPTER XXIII

A HAPHAZARD VICEROY

When the Government came into office, they were sorely puzzled where to find a Lord-Lieutenant for Ireland. It is, unhappily, a post that the men most fitted for generally refuse, while the Cabinet is besieged by a class of applicants whose highest qualification is a taste for mock-royalty combined with an encumbered estate.

Another great requisite, beside fortune and a certain amount of ability, was at this time looked for. The Premier was about, as newspapers call it, 'to inaugurate a new policy,' and he wanted a man who knew nothing about Ireland! Now, it might be carelessly imagined that here was one of those essentials very easily supplied. Any man frequenting club-life or dining out in town could have safely pledged himself to tell off a score or two of eligible Viceroys, so far as this qualification went. The

Minister, however, wanted more than mere ignorance: he wanted that sort of indifference on which a character for impartiality could so easily be constructed. Not alone a man unacquainted with Ireland, but actually incapable of being influenced by an Irish motive or affected by an Irish view of anything.

Good-luck would have it that he met such a man at dinner. He was an ambassador at Constantinople, on leave from his post, and so utterly dead to Irish topics as to be uncertain whether O'Donovan Rossa was a Fenian or a Queen's Counsel, and whether he whom he had read of as the 'Lion of Judah' was the king of beasts or the Archbishop of Tuam!

The Minister was pleased with his new acquaintance, and talked much to him, and long. He talked well, and not the less well that his listener was a fresh audience, who heard everything for the first time, and with all the interest that attaches to a new topic. Lord Danesbury was, indeed, that 'sheet of white paper' the head of the Cabinet had long been searching for, and he hastened to inscribe him with the characters he wished.

'You must go to Ireland for me, my lord,' said the Minister. 'I have met no one as yet so rightly imbued with the necessities of the situation. You must be our Viceroy.'

Now, though a very high post and with great surroundings, Lord Danesbury had no desire to exchange his position as an ambassador, even to become a Lord-Lieutenant. Like most men who have passed their lives abroad, he grew to like the ways and habits of the Continent. He liked the easy indulgences in many things, he liked the cosmopolitanism that surrounds existence, and even in its littleness is not devoid of a certain breadth; and best of all he liked the vast interests at stake, the large questions at issue, the fortunes of states, the fate of dynasties! To come down from the great game, as played by kings and kaisers, to the small traffic of a local government wrangling over a road-bill, or disputing over a harbour, seemed too horrible to confront, and he eagerly begged the Minister to allow him to return to his post, and not risk a hard-earned reputation on a new and untried career.

'It is precisely from the fact of its being new and untried I need you,' was the reply, and his denial was not accepted.

Refusal was impossible; and with all the reluctance a man consents to what his convictions are more opposed to even than his reasons, Lord Danesbury gave in, and accepted the viceroyalty of Ireland.

He was deferential to humility in listening to the great aims and noble conceptions of the mighty Minister, and pledged him-

self—as he could safely do—to become as plastic as wax in the powerful hands which were about to remodel Ireland.

He was gazetted in due course, went over to Dublin, made a state entrance, received the usual deputations, complimented every one, from the Provost of Trinity College to the Chief Commissioner of Pipewater; praised the coast, the corporation, and the city; declared that he had at length reached the highest goal of his ambition; entertained the high dignitaries at dinner, and the week after retired to his ancestral seat in North Wales, to recruit after his late fatigue, and throw off the effects of that damp, moist climate which already he fancied had affected him.

He had been sworn in with every solemnity of the occasion; he had sat on the throne of state, named the officers of his household, made a master of the horse, and a state steward, and a grand chamberlain; and, till stopped by hearing that he could not create ladies and maids of honour, he fancied himself every inch a king; but now that he had got over to the tranquil quietude of his mountain home, his thoughts went away to the old channels, and he began to dream of the Russians in the Balkan and the Greeks in Thessaly. Of all the precious schemes that had taken him months to weave, what was to come of them *now*? How and with what would his successor, whoever he should be, oppose the rogueries of Sumayloff or the chicanery of Ignatief? what would any man not trained to the especial watchfulness of this subtle game know of the steps by which men advanced? Who was to watch Bulgaria and see how far Russian gold was embellishing the life of Athens? There was not a hungry agent that lounged about the Russian embassy in Greek petticoats and pistols whose photograph the English ambassador did not possess, with a biographical note at the back to tell the fellow's name and birthplace, what he was meant for, and what he cost. Of every interview of his countrymen with the Grand-Vizier he was kept fully informed, and whether a forage magazine was established on the Pruth, or a new frigate laid down at Nickolief, the news reached him by the time it arrived at St. Petersburg. It is true he was aware how hopeless it was to write home about these things. The ambassador who writes disagreeable despatches is a bore or an old woman. He who dares to shake the security by which we daily boast we are surrounded, is an alarmist, if not worse. Notwithstanding this, he held his cards well 'up' and played them shrewdly. And now he was to turn from this crafty game, with all its excitement, to pore over constabulary reports and snub justices of the peace!

But there was worse than this. There was an Albanian spy who had been much employed by him of late, a clever fellow, with access to society, and great facilities for obtaining information. Seeing that Lord Danesbury should not return to the embassy, would this fellow go over to the enemy? If so, there were no words for the mischief he might effect. By a subordinate position in a Greek government-office, he had often been selected to convey despatches to Constantinople, and it was in this way his lordship first met him; and as the fellow frankly presented himself with a very momentous piece of news, he at once showed how he trusted to British faith not to betray him. It was not alone the incalculable mischief such a man might do by change of allegiance, but the whole fabric on which Lord Danesbury's reputation rested was in this man's keeping; and of all that wondrous prescience on which he used to pride himself before the world, all the skill with which he baffled an adversary, and all the tact with which he overwhelmed a colleague, this same 'Speridionides' could give the secret and show the trick.

How much more constantly, then, did his lordship's thoughts revert to the Bosporus than the Liffey! all this home news was mean, commonplace, and vulgar. The whole drama—scenery, actors, plot—all were low and ignoble; and as for this 'something that was to be done for Ireland,' it would of course be some slowly germinating policy to take root now, and blossom in another half-century: one of those blessed parliamentary enactments which men who dealt in heroic remedies like himself regarded as the chronic placebo of the political quack.

'I am well aware,' cried he aloud, 'for what they are sending me over. I am to "make a case" in Ireland for a political legislation, and the bill is already drawn and ready; and while I am demonstrating to Irish Churchmen that they will be more pious without a religion, and the landlords richer without rent, the Russians will be mounting guard at the Golden Horn, and the last British squadron steaming down the Levant.'

It was in a temper kindled by these reflections he wrote this note:—

'Plmnuddm Castle, North Wales.

'Dear Walpole,—I can make nothing out of the papers you have sent me; nor am I able to discriminate between what you admit to be newspaper slander and the attack on the castle with the unspeakable name. At all events, your account is far too graphic for the Treasury lords, who have less of the pictorial about them than Mr. Mudie's subscribers. If the Irish peasants are so impatient to assume their rights that they will not wait for the

"Hatt-Houmaïoun," or Bill in Parliament that is to endow them, I suspect a little further show of energy might save us a debate and a third reading. I am, however, far more eager for news from Therapia. Tolstai has been twice over with despatches; and Boustikoff, pretending to have sprained his ankle, cannot leave Odessa, though I have ascertained that he has laid down new lines of fortification, and walked over twelve miles per day. You may have heard of the great "Speridionides," a scoundrel that supplied me with intelligence. I should like much to get him over here while I am on my leave, confer with him, and, if possible, save him *from the necessity of other engagements.* It is not every one could be trusted to deal with a man of this stamp, nor would the fellow himself easily hold relations with any but a gentleman. Are you sufficiently recovered from your sprained arm to undertake this journey for me? If so, come over at once, that I may give you all necessary indications as to the man and his whereabouts.

'Maude has been "on the sick list," but is better, and able to ride out to-day. I cannot fill the law-appointments till I go over, nor shall I go over till I cannot help it. The Cabinet is scattered over the Scotch lakes. C. alone in town, and preparing for the War Ministry by practising the goose-step. Telegraph, if possible, that you are coming, and believe me yours, DANESBURY.'

CHAPTER XXIV

TWO FRIENDS AT BREAKFAST

IRISHMEN may reasonably enough travel for climate, they need scarcely go abroad in search of scenery. Within even a very short distance from the capital, there are landscapes which, for form, outline, and colour, equal some of the most celebrated spots of continental beauty.

One of these is the view from Bray Head over the wide expanse of the Bay of Dublin, with Howth and Lambay in the far distance. Nearer at hand lies the sweep of that graceful shore to Killiney, with the Dalky Islands dotting the calm sea; while inland, in wild confusion, are grouped the Wicklow Mountains, massive with wood and teeming with a rich luxuriance.

When sunlight and stillness spread colour over the blue mirror of the sea—as is essential to the scene—I know of nothing, not even Naples or Amalfi, can surpass this marvellous picture.

It was on a terrace that commanded this view that Walpole

and Atlee sat at breakfast on a calm autumnal morning; the white-sailed boats scarcely creeping over their shadows; and the whole scene, in its silence and softened effect, presenting a picture of almost rapturous tranquillity.

'With half a dozen days like this,' said Atlee, as he smoked his cigarette, in a sort of languid grace, 'one would not say O'Connell was wrong in his glowing admiration for Irish scenery. If I were to awake every day for a week to this, I suspect I should grow somewhat crazy myself about the green island.'

'And dash the description with a little treason too,' said the other superciliously. 'I have always remarked the ingenious connection with which Irishmen bind up a love of the picturesque with a hate of the Saxon.'

'Why not? They are bound together in the same romance. Can you look on the Parthenon and not think of the Turk?'

'Apropos of the Turk,' said the other, laying his hand on a folded letter which lay before him, 'here's a long letter from Lord Danesbury about that wearisome "Eastern question," as they call the ten thousand issues that await the solution of the Bosporus. Do you take interest in these things.'

'Immensely. After I have blown myself with a sharp burst on home politics, I always take a canter among the Druses and the Lebanites; and I am such an authority on the "Grand Idea," that Rangabe refers to me as "the illustrious statesman whose writings relieve England from the stain of universal ignorance about Greece."'

'And do you know anything on the subject?'

'About as much as the present Cabinet does of Ireland. I know all the clap-traps: the grand traditions that have sunk down into a present barbarism—of course, through ill government; the noble instincts depraved by gross usage; I know the inherent love of freedom we cherish, which makes men resent rents as well as laws, and teaches that taxes are as great a tyranny as the rights of property.'

'And do the Greeks take this view of it?'

'Of course they do; and it was in experimenting on them that your great Ministers learned how to deal with Ireland. There was but one step from Thebes to Tipperary. Corfu was "pacified" —that's the phrase for it—by abolishing the landlords. The peasants were told they might spare a little if they liked to the ancient possessor of the soil; and so they took the ground, and they gave him the olive-trees. You may imagine how fertile these were, when the soil around them was utilised to the last fraction of productiveness.'

'Is that a fair statement of the case?'

'Can you ask the question? I'll show it to you in print.'

'Perhaps written by yourself?'

'And why not? What convictions have not broken on my mind by reading my own writings? You smile at this; but how do you know your face is clean till you look in a glass?'

Walpole, however, had ceased to attend to the speaker, and was deeply engaged with the letter before him.

'I see here,' cried he, 'his Excellency is good enough to say that some mark of royal favour might be advantageously extended to those Kilgobbin people, in recognition of their heroic defence. What should it be, is the question.'

'Confer on him the peerage, perhaps.'

'That is totally out of the question.'

'It was Kate Kearney made the defence; why not give her a commission in the army?—make it another "woman's right."'

'You are absurd, Mr. Atlee.'

'Suppose you endowed her out of the Consolidated Fund? Give her twenty thousand pounds, and I can almost assure you that a very clever fellow I know will marry her.'

'A strange reward for good conduct.'

'A prize of virtue. They have that sort of thing in France, and they say it gives a great support to purity of morals.'

'Young Kearney might accept something, if we knew what to offer him.'

'I'd say a pair of black trousers; for I think I'm now wearing his last in that line.'

'Mr. Atlee,' said the other grimly, 'let me remind you once again, that the habit of light jesting—*persiflage*—is so essentially Irish, you should keep it for your countrymen; and if you persist in supposing the career of a private secretary suits you, this is an incongruity that will totally unfit you for the walk.'

'I am sure you know your countrymen, sir, and I am grateful for the rebuke.'

Walpole's cheek flushed at this, and it was plain that there was a hidden meaning in the words which he felt, and resented.

'I do not know,' continued Walpole, 'if I am not asking you to curb one of the strongest impulses of your disposition; but it rests entirely with yourself whether my counsel be worth following.'

'Of course it is, sir. I shall follow your advice to the letter, and keep all my good spirits and my bad manners for my countrymen.'

It was evident that Walpole had to exercise some strong self-

control not to reply sharply; but he refrained, and turned once more to Lord Danesbury's letter, in which he was soon deeply occupied. At last he said: 'His Excellency wants to send me out to Turkey to confer with a man with whom he has some confidential relations. It is quite impossible that, in my present state of health, I could do this. Would the thing suit you, Atlee—that is, if, on consideration, I should opine that *you* would suit *it*?'

'I suspect,' replied Atlee, but with every deference in his manner, 'if you would entertain the last part of the contingency first, it would be more convenient to each of us. I mean whether I were fit for the situation.'

'Well, perhaps so,' said the other carelessly; 'it is not at all impossible, it may be one of the things you would acquit yourself well in. It is a sort of exercise for tact and discretion—an occasion in which that light hand of yours would have a field for employment, and that acute skill in which I know you pride yourself as regards reading character——'

'You have certainly piqued my curiosity,' said Atlee.

'I don't know that I ought to have said so much; for, after all, it remains to be seen whether Lord Danesbury would estimate these gifts of yours as highly as I do. What I think of doing is this: I shall send you over to his Excellency in your capacity as my own private secretary, to explain how unfit I am in my present disabled condition to undertake a journey. I shall tell my lord how useful I have found your services with regard to Ireland, how much you know of the country and the people, and how worthy of trust I have found your information and your opinions; and I shall hint—but only hint, remember—that, for the mission he speaks of, he might possibly do worse than fix upon yourself. As, of course, it rests with him to be like-minded with me or not upon this matter—to take, in fact, his own estimate of Mr. Atlee from his own experiences of him—you are not to know anything whatever of this project till his Excellency thinks proper to open it to you. You understand that?'

'Thoroughly.'

'Your mission will be to explain—when asked to explain—certain difficulties of Irish life and habits, and if his lordship should direct conversation to topics of the East, to be careful to know nothing of the subject whatever—mind that.'

'I shall be careful. I have read the *Arabian Nights*—but that's all.'

'And of that tendency to small joking and weak epigram I would also caution you to beware; they will have no success in

the quarter to which you are going, and they will only damage other qualities which you might possibly rely on.'

Atlee bowed a submissive acquiescence.

'I don't know that you'll see Lady Maude Bickerstaffe, his lordship's niece.' He stopped as if he had unwittingly uttered an awkwardness, and then added—'I mean she has not been well, and may not appear while you are at the castle; but if you should—and if, which is not at all likely, but still possible, you should be led to talk of Kilgobbin and the incident that has got into the papers, you must be very guarded in all you say. It is a county family of station and repute. We were there as visitors. The ladies—I don't know that I'd say very much of the ladies.'

'Except that they were exceedingly plain in looks, and somewhat *passées* besides,' added Atlee gravely.

'I don't see why you should say that, sir,' replied the other stiffly. 'If you are not bent on compromising me by an indiscretion, I don't perceive the necessity of involving me in a falsehood.

'You shall be perfectly safe in my hands,' said Atlee.

'And that I may be so, say as little about me as you can. I know the injunction has its difficulties, Mr. Atlee, but pray try and observe it.'

The conversation had now arrived at a point in which one angry word more must have produced a rupture between them; and though Atlee took in the whole situation and its consequences at a glance, there was nothing in the easy jauntiness of his manner that gave any clue to a sense of anxiety or discomfort.

'Is it likely,' asked he at length, 'that his Excellency will advert to the idea of recognising or rewarding these people for their brave defence?'

'I am coming to that, if you will spare me a little patience: Saxon slowness is a blemish you'll have to grow accustomed to. If Lord Danesbury should know that you are an acquaintance of the Kilgobbin family, and ask you what would be a suitable mode of showing how their conduct has been appreciated in a high quarter, you should be prepared with an answer.'

Atlee's eyes twinkled with a malicious drollery, and he had to bite his lips to repress an impertinence that seemed almost to master his prudence, and at last he said carelessly—

'Dick Kearney might get something.'

'I suppose you know that his qualifications will be tested. You bear that in mind, I hope——'

'Yes. I was just turning it over in my head, and I thought the best thing to do would be to make him a Civil Service Commissioner. They are the only people taken on trust.'

'You are severe, Mr. Atlee. Have these gentlemen earned this dislike on your part?'

'Do you mean by having rejected me? No, that they have not. I believe I could have survived that; and if, however, they had come to the point of telling me that they were content with my acquirements, and what is called "passed me," I fervently believe I should have been seized with an apoplexy.'

'Mr. Atlee's opinion of himself is not a mean one,' said Walpole, with a cold smile.

'On the contrary, sir, I have occasion to feel pretty often in every twenty-four hours what an ignominious part a man plays in life who has to affect to be taught what he knows already—to be asking the road where he has travelled every step of the way—and to feel that a threadbare coat and broken boots take more from the value of his opinions than if he were a knave or a black-leg.'

'I don't see the humility of all this.'

'I feel the shame of it, though,' said Atlee; and as he arose and walked out upon the terrace, the veins in his forehead were swelled and knotted, and his lips trembled with suppressed passion.

In a tone that showed how thoroughly indifferent he felt to the other's irritation, Walpole went on to say: 'You will then make it your business, Mr. Atlee, to ascertain in what way most acceptable to those people at Kilgobbin his Excellency may be able to show them some mark of royal favour—bearing in mind not to commit yourself to anything that may raise great expectations. In fact, a recognition is what is intended, not a reward.'

Atlee's eyes fell upon the opal ring, which he always wore since the day Walpole had given it to him, and there was something so significant in the glance that the other flushed as he caught it.

'I believe I appreciate the distinction,' said Atlee quietly. 'It is to be something in which the generosity of the donor is more commemorated than the merits of the person rewarded, and, consequently, a most appropriate recognition of the Celt by the Saxon. Do you think I ought to go down to Kilgobbin Castle, sir?'

'I am not quite sure about that; I'll turn it over in my mind. Meanwhile I'll telegraph to my lord that, if he approves, I shall send you over to Wales; and you had better make what arrangements you have to make, to be ready to start at a moment.

'Unfortunately, sir, I have none. I am in the full enjoyment of such complete destitution, that I am always ready to go anywhere.'

Walpole did not notice the words, but arose and walked over to a writing-table to compose his message for the telegraph.

'There,' said he, as he folded it, 'have the kindness to despatch this at once, and do not be out of the way about five, or half-past, when I shall expect an answer.'

'Am I free to go into town meanwhile?' asked Atlee.

Walpole nodded assent without speaking.

'I wonder if this sort of flunkeydom be good for a man,' muttered Atlee to himself as he sprang down the stairs. 'I begin to doubt it. At all events, I understand now the secret of the first lieutenant's being a tyrant: he has once been a middy. And so I say, let me only reach the ward-room, and Heaven help the cockpit!'

CHAPTER XXV

ATLEE'S EMBARRASSMENTS

When Atlee returned to dress for dinner, he was sent for hurriedly by Walpole, who told him that Lord Danesbury's answer had arrived with the order, 'Send him over at once, and write fully at the same time.'

'There is an eleven o'clock packet, Atlee, to-night,' said he: 'you must manage to start by that. You'll reach Holyhead by four or thereabouts, and can easily get to the castle by midday.'

'I wish I had had a little more time,' muttered the other. 'If I am to present myself before his Excellency in such a "rig" as this——'

'I have thought of that. We are nearly of the same size and build; you are, perhaps, a trifle taller, but nothing to signify. Now Buckmaster has just sent me a mass of things of all sorts from town; they are in my dressing-room, not yet unpacked. Go up and look at them after dinner: take what suits you—as much—all, if you like—but don't delay now. It only wants a few minutes of seven o'clock.'

Atlee muttered his thanks hastily, and went his way If there was a thoughtfulness in the generosity of this action, the mode in which it was performed—the measured coldness of the words—the look of impassive examination that accompanied them, and the abstention from anything that savoured of apology for a liberty—were all deeply felt by the other.

It was true, Walpole had often heard him tell of the freedom with which he had treated Dick Kearney's wardrobe, and how

poor Dick was scarcely sure he could call an article of dress his own, whenever Joe had been the first to go out into the town. The innumerable straits to which he reduced that unlucky chum, who had actually to deposit a dinner-suit at an hotel to save it from Atlee's rapacity, had amused Walpole; but then these things were all done in the spirit of the honest familiarity that prevailed between them—the tie of true *camaraderie* that neither suggested a thought of obligation on one side nor of painful inferiority on the other. Here it was totally different. These men did not live together with that daily interchange of liberties which, with all their passing contentions, so accustom people to each other's humours as to establish the soundest and strongest of all friendships. Walpole had adopted Atlee because he found him useful in a variety of ways. He was adroit, ready-witted, and intelligent; a half-explanation sufficed with him on anything —a mere hint was enough to give him for an interview or a reply. He read people readily, and rarely failed to profit by the knowledge. Strange as it may seem, the great blemish of his manner—his snobbery—Walpole rather liked than disliked it. It was a sort of qualifying element that satisfied him, as though it said, 'With all that fellow's cleverness, he is not "one of us." He might make a wittier reply, or write a smarter note; but society has its little tests—not one of which he could respond to.' And this was an inferiority Walpole loved to cherish and was pleased to think over.

Atlee felt that Walpole might, with very little exercise of courtesy, have dealt more considerately by him.

'I'm not exactly a valet,' muttered he to himself, 'to whom a man flings a waistcoat as he chucks a shilling to a porter. I am more than Mr. Walpole's equal in many things, which are not accidents of fortune.'

He knew scores of things he could do better than him; indeed, there were very few he could not.

Poor Joe was not, however, aware that it was in the 'not doing' lay Walpole's secret of superiority; that the inborn sense of abstention is the great distinguishing element of the class Walpole belonged to; and he might harass himself for ever, and yet never guess where it was that the distinction evaded him.

Atlee's manner at dinner was unusually cold and silent. He habitually made the chief efforts of conversation, now he spoke little and seldom. When Walpole talked, it was in that careless discursive way it was his wont to discuss matters with a familiar. He often put questions, and as often went on without waiting for the answers.

As they sat over the dessert and were alone, he adverted to the other's mission, throwing out little hints, and cautions as to manner, which Atlee listened to in perfect silence, and without the slightest sign that could indicate the feeling they produced.

'You are going into a new country, Atlee,' said he at last, 'and I am sure you will not be sorry to learn something of the geography.'

'Though it may mar a little of the adventure,' said the other, smiling.

'Ah, that's exactly what I want to warn you against. With us in England, there are none of those social vicissitudes you are used to here. The game of life is played gravely, quietly, and calmly. There are no brilliant successes of bold talkers, no *coups de théâtre* of amusing *raconteurs*: no one tries to push himself into any position of eminence.'

A half-movement of impatience, as Atlee pushed his wine-glass before him, arrested the speaker.

'I perceive,' said he stiffly, 'you regard my counsels as unnecessary.'

'Not that, sir, so much as hopeless,' rejoined the other coldly.

'His Excellency will ask you, probably, some questions about this country: let me warn you not to give him Irish answers.'

'I don't think I understand you, sir.'

'I mean, don't deal in any exaggerations, avoid extravagance, and never be slapdash.'

'Oh, these are Irish, then?'

Without deigning reply to this, Walpole went on—

'Of course you have your remedy for all the evils of Ireland. I never met an Irishman who had not. But I beg you spare his lordship your theory, whatever it is, and simply answer the questions he will ask you.'

'I will try, sir,' was the meek reply.

'Above all things, let me warn you against a favourite blunder of your countrymen. Don't endeavour to explain peculiarities of action in this country by singularities of race or origin; don't try to make out that there are special points of view held that are unknown on the other side of the Channel, or that there are other differences between the two peoples, except such as more rags and greater wretchedness produce. We have got over that very venerable and time-honoured blunder, and do not endeavour to revive it.'

'Indeed!'

'Fact, I assure you. It is possible in some remote country-house to chance upon some antiquated Tory who still cherishes

these notions; but you'll not find them amongst men of mind or intelligence, nor amongst any class of our people.'

It was on Atlee's lip to ask, 'Who were our people?' but he forbore by a mighty effort, and was silent.

'I don't know if I have any other cautions to give you. Do you?'

'No, sir. I could not even have reminded you of these, if you had not yourself remembered them.'

'Oh, I had almost forgotten it. If his Excellency should give you anything to write out, or to copy, don't smoke while you are over it: he abhors tobacco. I should have given you a warning to be equally careful as regards Lady Maude's sensibilities; but, on the whole, I suspect you'll scarcely see her.'

'Is that all, sir?' said the other, rising.

'Well, I think so. I shall be curious to hear how you acquit yourself—how you get on with his Excellency, and how he takes you; and you must write it all to me. Ain't you much too early? it's scarcely ten o'clock.'

'A quarter past ten; and I have some miles to drive to Kingstown.'

'And not yet packed, perhaps?' said the other listlessly.

'No, sir; nothing ready.'

'Oh! you'll be in ample time; I'll vouch for it. You are one of the rough-and-ready order, who are never late. Not but in this same flurry of yours you have made me forget something I know I had to say; and you tell me you can't remember it?'

'No, sir.'

'And yet,' said the other sententiously, 'the crowning merit of a private secretary is exactly that sort of memory. *Your* intellects, if properly trained, should be the complement of your chief's. The infinite number of things that are too small and too insignificant for *him*, are to have their place, duly docketed and dated, in *your* brain; and the very expression of his face should be an indication to you of what he is looking for and yet cannot remember. Do you mark me?'

'Half-past ten,' cried Atlee, as the clock chimed on the mantelpiece; and he hurried away without another word.

It was only as he saw the pitiable penury of his own scanty wardrobe that he could persuade himself to accept of Walpole's offer.

'After all,' he said, 'the loan of a dress-coat may be the turning-point of a whole destiny. Junot sold all he had to buy a sword, to make his first campaign; all I have is my shame, and here it goes for a suit of clothes!' And, with these words, he

rushed down to Walpole's dressing-room, and not taking time to inspect and select the contents, carried off the box, as it was, with him. 'I'll tell him all when I write,' muttered he, as he drove away.

CHAPTER XXVI

DICK KEARNEY'S CHAMBERS

When Dick Kearney quitted Kilgobbin Castle for Dublin, he was very far from having any projects in his head, excepting to show his cousin Nina that he could live without her.

'I believe,' muttered he to himself, 'she counts upon me as another "victim." These coquettish damsels have a theory that the "whole drama of life" is the game of their fascinations and the consequences that come of them, and that we men make it our highest ambition to win them, and subordinate all we do in life to their favour. I should like to show her that one man at least refuses to yield this allegiance, and that whatever her blandishments do with others, with him they are powerless.'

These thoughts were his travelling-companions for nigh fifty miles of travel, and, like most travelling-companions, grew to be tiresome enough towards the end of the journey.

When he arrived in Dublin, he was in no hurry to repair to his quarters in Trinity; they were not particularly cheery in the best of times, and now it was long vacation, with few men in town, and everything sad and spiritless; besides this, he was in no mood to meet Atlee, whose free-and-easy jocularity he knew he would not endure, even with his ordinary patience. Joe had never condescended to write one line since he had left Kilgobbin, and Dick, who felt that in presenting him to his family he had done him immense honour, was proportionately indignant at this show of indifference. But, by the same easy formula with which he could account for anything in Nina's conduct by her 'coquetry,' he was able to explain every deviation from decorum of Joe Atlee's by his 'snobbery.' And it is astonishing how comfortable the thought made him, that this man, in all his smartness and ready wit, in his prompt power to acquire, and his still greater quickness to apply knowledge, was after all a most consummate snob.

He had no taste for a dinner at commons, so he ate his mutton-chop at a tavern, and went to the play. Ineffably bored, he sauntered along the almost deserted streets of the city, and just as

midnight was striking, he turned under the arched portal of the college. Secretly hoping that Atlee might be absent, he inserted the key and entered his quarters.

The grim old coal-bunker in the passage, the silent corridor, and the dreary room at the end of it, never looked more dismal than as he surveyed them now by the light of a little wax-match he had lighted to guide his way. There stood the massive old table in the middle, with its litter of books and papers—memories of many a headache; and there was the paper of coarse Cavendish, against which he had so often protested, as well as a pewter-pot—a new infraction against propriety since he had been away. Worse, however, than all assaults on decency, were a pair of coarse highlows, which had been placed within the fender, and had evidently enjoyed the fire so long as it lingered in the grate.

'So like the fellow! so like him!' was all that Dick could mutter, and he turned away in disgust.

As Atlee never went to bed till daybreak, it was quite clear that he was from home, and as the college gates could not reopen till morning, Dick was not sorry to feel that he was safe from all intrusion for some hours. With this consolation, he betook him to his bedroom, and proceeded to undress. Scarcely, however, had he thrown off his coat than a heavy, long-drawn respiration startled him. He stopped and listened: it came again, and from the bed. He drew nigh, and there, to his amazement, on his own pillow, lay the massive head of a coarse-looking, vulgar man of about thirty, with a silk handkerchief fastened over it as nightcap. A brawny arm lay outside the bedclothes, with an enormous hand of very questionable cleanness, though one of his fingers wore a heavy gold ring.

Wishing to gain what knowledge he might of his guest before awaking him, Dick turned to inspect his clothes, which, in a wild disorder, lay scattered through the room. They were of the very poorest; but such still as might have belonged to a very humble clerk, or a messenger in a counting-house. A large black leather pocket-book fell from a pocket of the coat, and, in replacing it, Dick perceived it was filled with letters. On one of these, as he closed the clasp, he read the name, 'Mr. Daniel Donogan, Dartmouth Gaol.'

'What!' cried he, 'is this the great head-centre, Donogan, I have read so much of? and how is he here?'

Though Dick Kearney was not usually quick of apprehension, he was not long here in guessing what the situation meant: it was clear enough that Donogan, being a friend of Joe Atlee, had been harboured here as a safe refuge. Of all places in the capital,

none were so secure from the visits of the police as the college; indeed, it would have been no small hazard for the public force to have invaded these precincts. Calculating therefore that Kearney was little likely to leave Kilgobbin at present, Atlee had installed his friend in Dick's quarters. The indiscretion was a grave one; in fact, there was nothing—even to expulsion itself—might not have followed on discovery.

'So like him! so like him!' was all he could mutter, as he arose and walked about the room.

While he thus mused, he turned into Atlee's bedroom, and at once it appeared why Mr. Donogan had been accommodated in his room. Atlee's was perfectly destitute of everything: bed, chest of drawers, dressing-table, chair, and bath were all gone. The sole object in the chamber was a coarse print of a well-known informer of the year '98, 'Jemmy O'Brien,' under whose portrait was written, in Atlee's hand, 'Bought in at fourpence-halfpenny, at the general sale, in affectionate remembrance of his virtues, by one who feels himself to be a relative.—J. A.' Kearney tore down the picture in passion, and stamped upon it; indeed, his indignation with his chum had now passed all bounds of restraint.

'So like him in everything!' again burst from him in utter bitterness.

Having thus satisfied himself that he had read the incident aright, he returned to the sitting-room, and at once decided that he would leave Donogan to his rest till morning.

'It will be time enough then to decide what is to be done,' thought he.

He then proceeded to relight the fire, and drawing a sofa near, he wrapped himself in a railway-rug, and lay down to sleep. For a long time he could not compose himself to slumber: he thought of Nina and her wiles—ay, they were wiles; he saw them plainly enough. It was true he was no prize—no 'catch,' as they call it—to angle for, and such a girl as she was could easily look higher; but still he might swell the list of those followers she seemed to like to behold at her feet offering up every homage to her beauty, even to their actual despair. And he thought of his own condition—very hopeless and purposeless as it was.

'What a journey, to be sure, was life without a goal to strive for. Kilgobbin would be his one day; but by that time would it be able to pay off the mortgages that were raised upon it? It was true Atlee was no richer, but Atlee was a shifty, artful fellow, with scores of contrivances to go windward of fortune in even the very worst of weather. Atlee would do many a thing *he* would not stoop to.'

And as Kearney said this to himself, he was cautious in the use of his verb, and never said 'could,' but always 'would' do; and oh dear! is it not in this fashion that so many of us keep up our courage in life, and attribute to the want of will what we well know lies in the want of power.

Last of all he bethought himself of this man Donogan, a dangerous fellow in a certain way, and one whose companionship must be got rid of at any price. Plotting over in his mind how this should be done in the morning, he at last fell fast asleep.

So overcome was he by slumber, that he never awoke when that venerable institution called the college woman—the hag whom the virtue of unerring dons insists on imposing as a servant on resident students—entered, made up the fire, swept up the room, and arranged the breakfast-table. It was only as she jogged his arm to ask him for an additional penny to buy more milk, that he awoke and remembered where he was.

'Will I get yer honour a bit of bacon?' asked she, in a tone intended to be insinuating.

'Whatever you like,' said he drowsily.

'It's himself there likes a rasher—when he can get it,' said she, with a leer, and a motion of her thumb towards the adjoining room.

'Whom do you mean?' asked he, half to learn what and how much she knew of his neighbour.

'Oh! don't I know him well?—Dan Donogan,' replied she, with a grin. 'Didn't I see him in the dock with Smith O'Brien in '48, and wasn't he in trouble again after he got his pardon; and won't he always be in trouble?'

'Hush! don't talk so loud,' cried Dick warningly.

'He'd not hear me now if I was screechin'; it's the only time he sleeps hard; for he gets up about three or half-past—before it's day—and he squeezes through the bars of the window, and gets out into the park, and he takes his exercise there for two hours, most of the time running full speed and keeping himself in fine wind. Do you know what he said to me the other day? "Molly," says he, "when I know I can get between those bars there, and run round the college park in three minutes and twelve seconds, I feel that there's not many a gaol in Ireland can howld, and the divil a policeman in the island could catch, me."' And she had to lean over the back of a chair to steady herself while she laughed at the conceit.

'I think, after all,' said Kearney, 'I'd rather keep out of the scrape than trust to that way of escaping it.'

'*He* wouldn't,' said she. 'He rather be seducin' soldiers in

Barrack Street, or swearing in a new Fenian, or nailing a death-warnin' on a hall door, than he'd be lord mayor! If he wasn't in mischief he'd like to be in his grave.'

'And what comes of it all?' said Kearney, scarcely giving any exact meaning to his words.

'That's what I do be saying myself,' cried the hag. 'When they can transport you for singing a ballad, and send you to pick oakum for a green cravat, it's time to take to some other trade than patriotism! And with this reflection she shuffled away, to procure the materials for breakfast.

The fresh rolls, the watercress, a couple of red herrings devilled as those ancient damsels are expert in doing, and a smoking dish of rashers and eggs, flanked by a hissing tea-kettle, soon made their appearance, the hag assuring Kearney that a stout knock with the poker on the back of the grate would summon Mr. Donogan almost instantaneously—so rapidly, indeed, and with such indifference as to raiment, that, as she modestly declared, 'I have to take to my heels the moment I call him,' and the modest avowal was confirmed by her hasty departure.

The assurance was so far correct, that scarcely had Kearney replaced the poker, when the door opened, and one of the strangest figures he had ever beheld presented itself in the room. He was a short, thick-set man with a profusion of yellowish hair, which, divided in the middle of the head, hung down on either side to his neck—beard and moustache of the same hue, left little of the face to be seen but a pair of lustrous blue eyes, deep-sunken in their orbits, and a short wide-nostrilled nose, which bore the closest resemblance to a lion's. Indeed, a most absurd likeness to the king of beasts was the impression produced on Kearney as this wild-looking fellow bounded forward, and stood there amazed at finding a stranger to confront him.

His dress was a flannel-shirt and trousers, and a pair of old slippers which had once been Kearney's own.

'I was told by the college woman how I was to summon you, Mr. Donogan,' said Kearney good-naturedly. 'You are not offended with the liberty?'

'Are you Dick?' asked the other, coming forward.

'Yes. I think most of my friends know me by that name.

'And the old devil has told you mine?' asked he quickly.

'No, I believe I discovered that for myself. I tumbled over some of your things last night, and saw a letter addressed to you.

'You didn't read it?'

'Certainly not. It fell out of your pocket-book, and I put it back there.'

'So the old hag didn't blab on me? I'm anxious about this, because it's got out somehow that I'm back again. I landed at Kenmare in a fishing-boat from the New York packet, the *Osprey*, on Tuesday fortnight, and three of the newspapers had it before I was a week on shore.'

'Our breakfast is getting cold; sit down here and let me help you. Will you begin with a rasher?'

Not replying to the invitation, Donogan covered his plate with bacon, and leaning his arm on the table, stared fixedly at Kearney.

'I'm as glad as fifty pounds of it,' muttered he slowly to himself.

'Glad of what?'

'Glad that you're not a swell, Mr. Kearney,' said he gravely. '"The Honourable Richard Kearney," whenever I repeated that to myself, it gave me a cold sweat. I thought of velvet collars and a cravat with a grand pin in it, and a stuck-up creature behind both, that wouldn't condescend to sit down with me.'

'I'm sure Joe Atlee gave you no such impression of me.'

A short grunt that might mean anything was all the reply.

'He was my chum, and knew me better,' reiterated the other.

'He knows many a thing he doesn't say, and he says plenty that he doesn't know. "Kearney will be a swell," said I, "and he'll turn upon me just out of contempt for my condition."

'That was judging me hardly, Mr. Donogan.'

'No, it wasn't; it's the treatment the mangy dogs meet all the world over. Why is England insolent to us, but because we're poor—answer me that! Are we mangy? Don't you feel mangy?—I know *I* do!'

Dick smiled a sort of mild contradiction, but said nothing.

'Now that I see you, Mr. Kearney,' said the other, 'I'm as glad as a ten-pound note about a letter I wrote you——'

'I never received a letter from you.'

'Sure I know you didn't! haven't I got it here?' And he drew forth a square-shaped packet and held it up before him. 'I never said that I sent it, nor I won't send it now: here's its present address,' added he, as he threw it on the fire and pressed it down with his foot.

'Why not have given it to me now?' asked the other.

'Because three minutes will tell you all that was in it, and better than writing; for I can reply to anything that wants an explanation, and that's what a letter cannot. First of all, do you know that Mr. Claude Barry, your county member, has asked for the Chiltern, and is going to resign?'

'No, I have not heard it.'

'Well, it's a fact. They are going to make him a second secretary somewhere, and pension him off. He has done his work: he voted an Arms Bill and an Insurrection Act, and he had the influenza when the amnesty petition was presented, and sure no more could be expected from any man.'

'The question scarcely concerns me; our interest in the county is so small now, we count for very little.'

'And don't you know how to make your influence greater?'

'I cannot say that I do.'

'Go to the poll yourself, Richard Kearney, and be the member.'

'You are talking of an impossibility, Mr. Donogan. First of all, we have no fortune, no large estates in the county, with a wide tenantry and plenty of votes; secondly, we have no place amongst the county families, as our old name and good blood might have given us; thirdly, we are of the wrong religion, and, I take it, with as wrong politics; and lastly, we should not know what to do with the prize if we had won it.'

'Wrong in every one of your propositions—wholly wrong,' cried the other. 'The party that will send you in won't want to be bribed, and they'll be proud of a man who doesn't overtop them with his money. You don't need the big families, for you'll beat them. Your religion is the right one, for it will give you the Priests; and your politics shall be Repeal, and it will give you the Peasants; and as to not knowing what to do when you're elected, are you so mighty well off in life that you've nothing to wish for?'

'I can scarcely say that,' said Dick, smiling.

'Give me a few minutes' attention,' said Donogan, 'and I think I'll show you that I've thought this matter out and out; indeed, before I sat down to write to you, I went into all the details.'

And now, with a clearness and a fairness that astonished Kearney, this strange-looking fellow proceeded to prove how he had weighed the whole difficulty, and saw how, in the nice balance of the two great parties who would contest the seat, the Repealer would step in and steal votes from both.

He showed not only that he knew every barony of the county, and every estate and property, but that he had a clear insight into the different localities where discontent prevailed, and places where there was something more than discontent.

'It is down there,' said he significantly, 'that I can be useful. The man that has had his foot in the dock, and only escaped having his head in the noose, is never discredited in Ireland. Talk Parliament and parliamentary tactics to the small shop-

keepers in Moate, and leave me to talk treason to the people in the bog.'

'But I mistake you and your friends greatly,' said Kearney, 'if these were the tactics you always followed; I thought that you were the physical-force party, who sneered at constitutionalism and only believed in the pike.'

'So we did, so long as we saw O'Connell and the lawyers working the game of that grievance for their own advantage, and teaching the English Government how to rule Ireland by a system of concession to *them* and to *their* friends. Now, however, we begin to perceive that to assault that heavy bastion of Saxon intolerance, we must have spies in the enemy's fortress, and for this we send in so many members to the Whig party. There are scores of men who will aid us by their vote who would not risk a bone in our cause. Theirs is a sort of subacute patriotism; but it has its use. It smashes an Established Church, breaks down Protestant ascendency, destroys the prestige of landed property, and will in time abrogate entail and primogeniture, and many another fine thing; and in this way it clears the ground for our operations, just as soldiers fell trees and level houses lest they interfere with the range of heavy artillery.'

'So that the place you would assign me is that very honourable one you have just called a "spy in the camp"?'

'By a figure I said that, Mr. Kearney; but you know well enough what I meant was, that there 's many a man will help us on the Treasury benches that would not turn out on Tallaght; and we want both. I won't say,' added he, after a pause, 'I 'd not rather see you a leader in our ranks than a Parliament man. I was bred a doctor, Mr. Kearney, and I must take an illustration from my own art. To make a man susceptible of certain remedies, you are often obliged to reduce his strength and weaken his constitution. So it is here. To bring Ireland into a condition to be bettered by Repeal, you must crush the Church and smash the bitter Protestants. The Whigs will do these for us, but we must help them. Do you understand me now?'

'I believe I do. In the case you speak of, then, the Government will support my election.'

'Against a Tory, yes; but not against a pure Whig—a thoroughgoing supporter who would bargain for nothing for his country, only something for his own relations.'

'If your project has an immense fascination for me at one moment, and excites my ambition beyond all bounds, the moment I turn my mind to the cost, and remember my own poverty, I see nothing but hopelessness.'

'That's not my view of it, nor when you listen to me patiently, will it, I believe, be yours. Can we have another talk over this in the evening?'

'To be sure! we'll dine here together at six.'

'Oh, never mind me, think of yourself, Mr. Kearney, and your own engagements. As to the matter of dining, a crust of bread and a couple of apples are fully as much as I want or care for.'

'We'll dine together to-day at six,' said Dick, 'and bear in mind, I am more interested in this than you are.'

CHAPTER XXVII

A CRAFTY COUNSELLOR

As they were about to sit down to dinner on that day, a telegram, re-directed from Kilgobbin, reached Kearney's hand. It bore the date of that morning from Plmnuddm Castle, and was signed 'Atlee.' Its contents were these: 'H. E. wants to mark the Kilgobbin defence with some sign of approval. What shall it be? Reply by wire.'

'Read that, and tell us what you think of it.'

'Joe Atlee at the Viceroy's castle in Wales!' cried the other. 'We're going up the ladder hand over head, Mr. Kearney! A week ago his ambition was bounded on the south by Ship Street, and on the east by the Lower Castle Yard.'

'How do you understand the despatch?' asked Kearney quickly.

'Easily enough. His Excellency wants to know what you'll have for shooting down three—I think they were three—Irishmen.'

'The fellows came to demand arms, and with loaded guns in their hands.'

'And if they did! Is not the first right of a man the weapon that defends him? He that cannot use it or does not possess it, is a slave. By what prerogative has Kilgobbin Castle within its walls what can take the life of any, the meanest, tenant on the estate?'

'I am not going to discuss this with you; I think I have heard most of it before, and was not impressed when I did so. What I asked was, what sort of a recognition one might safely ask for and reasonably expect?'

'That's not long to look for. Let them support you in the county. Telegraph back, "I'm going to stand, and, if I get in,

will be a Whig whenever I am not a Nationalist. Will the party stand by me?"'

'Scarcely with that programme.'

'And do you think that the priests' nominees, who are three-fourths of the Irish members, offer better terms? Do you imagine that the men that crowd the Whig lobby have not reserved their freedom of action about the Pope, and the Fenian prisoners, and the Orange processionists? If they were not free so far, I'd ask you with the old Duke, How is Her Majesty's Government to be carried on?'

Kearney shook his head in dissent.

'And that's not all,' continued the other; 'but you must write to the papers a flat contradiction of that shooting story. You must either declare that it never occurred at all, or was done by that young scamp from the Castle, who happily got as much as he gave.'

'That I could not do,' said Kearney firmly.

'And it is that precisely that you must do,' rejoined the other. 'If you go into the House to represent the popular feeling of Irishmen, the hand that signs the roll must not be stained with Irish blood.'

'You forget; I was not within fifty miles of the place.'

'And another reason to disavow it. Look here, Mr. Kearney: if a man in a battle was to say to himself, I'll never give any but a fair blow, he'd make a mighty bad soldier. Now, public life is a battle, and worse than a battle in all that touches treachery and falsehood. If you mean to do any good in the world, to yourself and your country, take my word for it, you'll have to do plenty of things that you don't like, and, what's worse, can't defend.'

'The soup is getting cold all this time. Shall we sit down?'

'No, not till we answer the telegram. Sit down and say what I told you.'

'Atlee will say I'm mad. He knows that I have not a shilling in the world.'

'Riches is not the badge of the representation,' said the other.

'They can at least pay the cost of the elections.'

'Well, we'll pay ours too—not all at once, but later on; don't fret yourself about that.'

'They'll refuse me flatly.'

'No, we have a lien on the fine gentleman with the broken arm. What would the Tories give for that story, told as I could tell it to them? At all events, whatever you do in life, remember this—that if asked your price for anything you have done, name

the highest, and take nothing if it's refused you. It's a waiting race, but I never knew it fail in the end.'

Kearney despatched his message, and sat down to the table, far too much flurried and excited to care for his dinner. Not so his guest, who ate voraciously, seldom raising his head and never uttering a word. 'Here's to the new member for King's County,' said he at last, and he drained off his glass; 'and I don't know a pleasanter way of wishing a man prosperity than in a bumper. Has your father any politics, Mr. Kearney?'

'He thinks he's a Whig, but, except hating the Established Church and having a print of Lord Russell over the fireplace, I don't know he has other reason for the opinion.'

'All right; there's nothing finer for a young man entering public life than to be able to sneer at his father for a noodle. That's the practical way to show contempt for the wisdom of our ancestors. There's no appeal the public respond to with the same certainty as that of the man who quarrels with his relations for the sake of his principles, and whether it be a change in your politics or your religion, they're sure to uphold you.'

'If differing with my father will ensure my success, I can afford to be confident,' said Dick, smiling.

'Your sister has her notions about Ireland, hasn't she?'

'Yes, I believe she has; but she fancies that laws and Acts of Parliament are not the things in fault, but ourselves and our modes of dealing with the people, that were not often just, and were always capricious. I am not sure how she works out her problem, but I believe we ought to educate each other; and that in turn, for teaching the people to read and write, there are scores of things to be learned from them.'

'And the Greek girl?'

'The Greek girl'—began Dick haughtily, and with a manner that betokened rebuke, and which suddenly changed as he saw that nothing in the other's manner gave any indication of intended freedom or insolence—'The Greek is my first cousin, Mr. Donogan,' said he calmly; 'but I am anxious to know how you have heard of her, or indeed of any of us.'

'From Joe—Joe Atlee! I believe we have talked you over—every one of you—till I know you all as well as if I lived in the castle and called you by your Christian names. Do you know, Mr. Kearney'—and his voice trembled now as he spoke—'that to a lone and desolate man like myself, who has no home, and scarcely a country, there is something indescribably touching in the mere picture of the fireside, and the family gathered round it, talking over little homely cares and canvassing the changes

of each day's fortune. I could sit here half the night and listen to Atlee telling how you lived, and the sort of things that interested you.'

'So that you'd actually like to look at us?'

Donogan's eyes grew glassy, and his lips trembled, but he could not utter a word.

'So you shall, then,' cried Dick resolutely. 'We'll start to-morrow by the early train. You'll not object to a ten miles' walk, and we'll arrive for dinner.'

'Do you know who it is you are inviting to your father's house? Do you know that I am an escaped convict, with a price on my head this minute? Do you know the penalty of giving me shelter, or even what the law calls comfort?'

'I know this, that in the heart of the Bog of Allen, you'll be far safer than in the city of Dublin; that none shall ever learn who you are, nor, if they did, is there one—the poorest in the place—would betray you.'

'It is of you, sir, I'm thinking, not of me,' said Donogan calmly.

'Don't fret yourself about us. We are well known in our county, and above suspicion. Whenever you yourself should feel that your presence was like to be a danger, I am quite willing to believe you'd take yourself off.'

'You judge me rightly, sir, and I am proud to see it; but how are you to present me to your friends?'

'As a college acquaintance—a friend of Atlee's and of mine—a gentleman who occupied the room next me. I can surely say that with truth.'

'And dined with you every day since you knew him. Why not add that?'

He laughed merrily over this conceit, and at last Donogan said, 'I've a little kit of clothes—something decenter than these—up in Thomas Street, No. 13, Mr. Kearney; the old house Lord Edward was shot in, and the safest place in Dublin now, because it is so notorious. I'll step up for them this evening, and I'll be ready to start when you like.'

'Here's good fortune to us, whatever we do next,' said Kearney, filling both their glasses; and they touched the brims together, and clinked them before they drained them.

'Is not that as fine as your boasted Campagna?'

CHAPTER XXVIII

'ON THE LEADS'

KATE KEARNEY'S room was on the top of the castle, and 'gave' by a window over the leads of a large square tower. On this space she had made a little garden of a few flowers, to tend which was of what she called her 'dissipations.'

Some old packing-cases filled with mould sufficed to nourish a few stocks and carnations, a rose or two, and a mass of mignonette, which possibly, like the children of the poor, grew up sturdy and healthy from some of the adverse circumstances of their condition. It was a very favourite spot with her; and if she came hither in her happiest moments, it was here also her saddest hours were passed, sure that in the cares and employments of her loved plants she would find solace and consolation. It was at this window Kate now sat with Nina, looking over the vast plain, on which a rich moonlight was streaming, the shadows of fast-flitting clouds throwing strange and fanciful effects over a space almost wide enough to be a prairie.

'What a deal have mere names to do with our imaginations, Nina!' said Kate. 'Is not that boundless sweep before us as fine as your boasted Campagna? Does not the night wind career over it as joyfully, and is not the moonlight as picturesque in its breaks by turf-clamp and hillock as by ruined wall and tottering temple? In a word, are not we as well here, to drink in all this delicious silence, as if we were sitting on your loved Pincian?'

'Don't ask me to share such heresies. I see nothing out there but bleak desolation. I don't know if it ever had a past; I can almost swear it will have no future. Let us not talk of it.'

'What shall we talk of?' asked Kate, with an arch smile.

'You know well enough what led me up here. I want to hear what you know of that strange man Dick brought here to-day to dinner.'

'I never saw him before—never even heard of him.'

'Do you like him?'

'I have scarcely seen him.'

'Don't be so guarded and reserved. Tell me frankly the impression he makes on you. Is he not vulgar—very vulgar?'

'How should I say, Nina? Of all the people you ever met, who knows so little of the habits of society as myself? Those fine gentlemen who were here the other day shocked my ignorance

by numberless little displays of indifference. Yet I can feel that they must have been paragons of good-breeding, and that what I believed to be a very cool self-sufficiency, was in reality the very latest London version of good manners.'

'Oh, you did not like that charming carelessness of Englishmen that goes where it likes and when it likes, that does not wait to be answered when it questions, and only insists on one thing, which is—"not to be bored." If you knew, dearest Kate, how foreigners school themselves, and strive to catch up that insouciance, and never succeed—never!'

'My brother's friend certainly is no adept in it.'

'He is insufferable. I don't know that the man ever dined in the company of ladies before; did you remark that he did not open the door as we left the dinner-room? and if your brother had not come over, I should have had to open it for myself. I declare I'm not sure he stood up as we passed.'

'Oh yes; I saw him rise from his chair.'

'I'll tell you what you did not see. You did not see him open his napkin at dinner. He stole his roll of bread very slyly from the folds, and then placed the napkin, carefully folded, beside him.'

'You seem to have observed him closely, Nina.'

'I did so, because I saw enough in his manner to excite suspicion of his class, and I want to know what Dick means by introducing him here.'

'Papa liked him; at least he said that after we left the room a good deal of his shyness wore off, and that he conversed pleasantly and well. Above all, he seems to know Ireland perfectly.'

'Indeed!' said she, half disdainfully.

'So much so that I was heartily sorry to leave the room when I heard them begin the topic; but I saw papa wished to have some talk with him, and I went.'

'They were gallant enough not to join us afterwards, though I think we waited tea till ten.'

'Till nigh eleven, Nina; so that I am sure they must have been interested in their conversation.'

'I hope the explanation excuses them.'

'I don't know that they are aware they needed an apology. Perhaps they were affecting a little of that British insouciance you spoke of——'

'They had better not. It will sit most awkwardly on their Irish habits.'

'Some day or other I'll give you a formal battle on this score, Nina, and I warn you you'll not come so well out of it.'

'Whenever you like. I accept the challenge. Make this brilliant companion of your brother's the type, and it will test your cleverness, I promise you. Do you even know his name?'

'Mr. Daniel, my brother called him; but I know nothing of his country or of his belongings.'

'Daniel is a Christian name, not a family name, is it not? We have scores of people like that—Tommasina, Riccardi, and such like—in Italy—but they mean nothing.'

'Our friend below-stairs looks as if *that* was not his failing. I should say that he means a good deal.'

'Oh, I know you are laughing at my stupid phrase—no matter; you understand me, at all events. I don't like that man.'

'Dick's friends are not fortunate with you. I remember how unfavourably you judged of Mr. Atlee from his portrait.'

'Well, he looked rather better than his picture—less false, I mean; or perhaps it was that he had a certain levity of manner that carried off the perfidy.'

'What an amiable sort of levity!'

'You are too critical on me by half this evening,' said Nina pettishly; and she arose and strolled out upon the leads.

For some time Kate was scarcely aware she had gone. Her head was full of cares, and she sat trying to think some of them 'out,' and see her way to deal with them. At last the door of the room slowly and noiselessly opened, and Dick put in his head.

'I was afraid you might be asleep, Kate,' said he, entering, 'finding all so still and quiet here.'

'No. Nina and I were chatting here—squabbling, I believe, if I were to tell the truth; and I can't tell when she left me.'

'What could you be quarrelling about?' asked he, as he sat down beside her.

'I think it was with that strange friend of yours. We were not quite agreed whether his manners were perfect, or his habits those of the well-bred world. Then we wanted to know more of him, and each was dissatisfied that the other was so ignorant; and, lastly, we were canvassing that very peculiar taste you appear to have in friends, and were wondering where you find your odd people.'

'So then you don't like Donogan?' said he hurriedly.

'Like whom? And you call him Donogan!'

'The mischief is out,' said he. 'Not that I wanted to have secrets from you; but all the same, I am a precious bungler. His name is Donogan, and what's more, it's Daniel Donogan. He was the same who figured in the dock at, I believe, sixteen

years of age, with Smith O'Brien and the others, and was afterwards seen in England in '59, known as a head-centre, and apprehended on suspicion in '60, and made his escape from Dartmoor the same year. There's a very pretty biography in skeleton, is it not?'

'But, my dear Dick, how are you connected with him?'

'Not very seriously. Don't be afraid. I'm not compromised in any way, nor does he desire that I should be. Here is the whole story of our acquaintance.'

And now he told what the reader already knows of their first meeting and the intimacy that followed it.

'All that will take nothing from the danger of harbouring a man charged as he is,' said she gravely.

'That is to say, if he be tracked and discovered.'

'It is what I mean.'

'Well, one has only to look out of that window, and see where we are, and what lies around us on every side, to be tolerably easy on that score.'

And as he spoke, he arose and walked out upon the terrace.

'What, were you here all this time?' asked he, as he saw Nina seated on the battlement, and throwing dried leaves carelessly to the wind.

'Yes, I have been here this half-hour, perhaps longer.'

'And heard what we have been saying within there?'

'Some chance words reached me, but I did not follow them.'

'Oh, it was here you were, then, Nina!' cried Kate. 'I am ashamed to say I did not know it.'

'We got so warm in discussing your friend's merits or demerits, that we parted in a sort of huff,' said Nina. 'I wonder was he worth quarrelling for?'

'What should *you* say?' asked Dick inquiringly, as he scanned her face.

'In any other land, I might say he was—that is, that some interest might attach to him; but here, in Ireland, you all look so much brighter, and wittier, and more impetuous, and more out of the common than you really are, that I give up all divination of you, and own I cannot read you at all.'

'I hope you like the explanation,' said Kate to her brother, laughing.

'I'll tell my friend of it in the morning,' said Dick; 'and as he is a great national champion, perhaps he'll accept it as a defiance.'

'You do not frighten me by the threat,' said Nina calmly.

Dick looked from her face to his sister's and back again to

hers, to discern if he might how much she had overheard; but he could read nothing in her cold and impassive bearing, and he went his way in doubt and confusion.

CHAPTER XXIX

ON A VISIT AT KILGOBBIN

Before Kearney had risen from his bed the next morning, Donogan was in his room, his look elated and his cheek glowing with recent exercise. 'I have had a burst of two hours' sharp walking over the bog,' cried he; 'and it has put me in such spirits as I have not known for many a year. Do you know, Mr. Kearney, that what with the fantastic effects of the morning mists, as they lift themselves over these vast wastes—the glorious patches of blue heather and purple anemone that the sun displays through the fog—and better than all, the springiness of a soil that sends a thrill to the heart, like a throb of youth itself, there is no walking in the world can compare with a bog at sunrise! There's a sentiment to open a paper on nationalities! I came up with the post-boy, and took his letters to save him a couple of miles. Here's one for you, I think from Atlee; and this is also to your address, from Dublin; and here's the last number of the *Pike*, and you'll see they have lost no time. There's a few lines about you. "Our readers will be grateful to us for the tidings that we announce to-day, with authority—that Richard Kearney, Esq., son of Mathew Kearney, of Kilgobbin Castle, will contest his native county at the approaching election. It will be a proud day for Ireland when she shall see her representation in the names of those who dignify the exalted station they hold in virtue of their birth and blood, by claims of admitted talent and recognised ability. Mr. Kearney, junior, has swept the university of its prizes, and the college gate has long seen his name at the head of her prizemen. He contests the seat in the National interest. It is needless to say all our sympathies, and hopes, and best wishes go with him."'

Dick shook with laughing while the other read out the paragraph in a high-sounding and pretentious tone.

'I hope,' said Kearney at last, 'that the information as to my college successes is not vouched for on authority.'

'Who cares a fig about them? The phrase rounds off a sentence, and nobody treats it like an affidavit.'

'But some one may take the trouble to remind the readers

that my victories have been defeats, and that in my last examination but one I got "cautioned."'

'Do you imagine Mr. Kearney, the House of Commons in any way reflects college distinction? Do you look for senior wranglers and double-firsts on the Treasury bench? and are not the men who carry away distinction the men of breadth, not depth? Is it not the wide acquaintance with a large field of knowledge, and the subtle power to know how other men regard these topics, that make the popular leader of the present day? and remember, it is talk, and not oratory, is the mode. You must be commonplace, and even vulgar, practical, dashed with a small morality, so as not to be classed with the low Radical; and if then you have a bit of high-faluting for the peroration, you'll do. The morning papers will call you a young man of great promise, and the whip will never pass you without a shake-hands.'

'But there are good speakers.'

'There is Bright—I don't think I know another—and he only at times. Take my word for it, the secret of success with "the collective wisdom" is reiteration. Tell them the same thing, not once or twice or even ten, but fifty times, and don't vary very much even the way you tell it. Go on repeating your platitudes, and by the time you find you are cursing your own stupid persistence, you may swear you have made a convert to your opinions. If you are bent on variety, and must indulge it, ring your changes on the man who brought these views before them—yourself, but beyond these never soar. O'Connell, who had a variety at will for his own countrymen, never tried it in England: he knew better. The chawbacons that we sneer at are not always in smock-frocks, take my word for it; they many of them wear wide-brimmed hats and broadcloth, and sit above the gangway. Ay, sir,' cried he, warming with the theme, 'once I can get my countrymen fully awakened to the fact of who and what are the men who rule them, I'll ask for no Catholic Associations, or Repeal Committees, or Nationalist Clubs — the card-house of British supremacy will tumble of itself; there will be no conflict, but simply submission.'

'We're a long day's journey from these convictions, I suspect,' said Kearney doubtfully.

'Not so far, perhaps, as you think. Do you remark how little the English press deal in abuse of us to what was once their custom? They have not, I admit, come down to civility; but they don't deride us in the old fashion, nor tell us, as I once saw, that we are intellectually and physically stamped with inferiority. If it was true, Mr. Kearney, it was stupid to tell it to us.'

'I think we could do better than dwell upon these things.'

'I deny that: deny it *in toto*. The moment you forget, in your dealings with the Englishman, the cheap estimate he entertains, not alone of your brains and your skill, but of your resolution, your persistence, your strong will, ay, your very integrity, that moment, I say, places him in a position to treat you as something below him. Bear in mind, however, how he is striving to regard you, and it's your own fault if you're not his equal, and something more perhaps. There was a man more than the master of them all, and his name was Edmund Burke; and how did they treat *him*? How insolently did they behave to O'Connell in the House till he put his heel on them? Were they generous to Sheil? Were they just to Plunket? No, no. The element that they decry in our people they know they have not got, and they'd like to crush the race, when they cannot extinguish the quality.'

Donogan had so excited himself now that he walked up and down the room, his voice ringing with emotion, and his arms wildly tossing in all the extravagance of passion. 'This is from Joe Atlee,' said Kearney, as he tore open the envelope:—

'"Dear Dick,—I cannot account for the madness that seems to have seized you, except that Dan Donogan, the most rabid dog I know, has bitten you. If so, for Heaven's sake have the piece cut out at once, and use the strongest cautery of common sense, if you know of any one who has a little to spare. I only remembered yesterday that I ought to have told you I had sheltered Dan in our rooms, but I can already detect that you have made his acquaintance. He is not a bad fellow. He is sincere in his opinions, and incorruptible, if that be the name for a man who, if bought to-morrow, would not be worth sixpence to his owner.

'"Though I resigned all respect for my own good sense in telling it, I was obliged to let H. E. know the contents of your despatch, and then, as I saw he had never heard of Kilgobbin, or the great Kearney family, I told more lies of your estated property, your county station, your influence generally, and your abilities individually, than the fee-simple of your property, converted into masses, will see me safe through purgatory; and I have consequently baited the trap that has caught myself; for, persuaded by my eloquent advocacy of you all, H. E. has written to Walpole to make certain inquiries concerning you, which, if satisfactory, he, Walpole, will put himself in communication with you, as to the extent and the mode to which the Government will support you. I think I can see Dan Donogan's fine hand in that part of

your note which foreshadows a threat, and hints that the Walpole story would, if published abroad, do enormous damage to the Ministry. This, let me assure you, is a fatal error, and a blunder which could only be committed by an outsider in political life. The days are long past since a scandal could smash an administration; and we are so strong now that arson or forgery could not hurt, and I don't think that infanticide would affect us.

'"If you are really bent on this wild exploit, you should see Walpole, and confer with him. You don't talk well, but you write worse, so avoid correspondence, and do all your indiscretions verbally. Be angry if you like with my candour, but follow my counsel.

'"See him, and show him, if you are able, that, all questions of nationality apart, he may count upon your vote; that there are certain impracticable and impossible conceits in politics—like repeal, subdivision of land, restoration of the confiscated estates, and such like—on which Irishmen insist on being free to talk balderdash, and air their patriotism; but that, rightfully considered, they are as harmless and mean just as little as a discussion on the Digamma, or a debate on perpetual motion. The stupid Tories could never be brought to see this. Like genuine dolts, they would have an army of supporters, one-minded with them in everything. We know better, and hence we buy the Radical vote by a little coquetting with communism, and the model workingman and the rebel by an occasional gaol-delivery, and the Papist by a sop to the Holy Father. Bear in mind, Dick—and it is the grand secret of political life—it takes all sort of people to make a 'party.' When you have thoroughly digested this aphorism, you are fit to start in the world.

'"If you were not so full of what I am sure you would call your 'legitimate ambitions,' I'd like to tell you the glorious life we lead in this place. Disraeli talks of 'the well-sustained splendour of their stately lives,' and it is just the phrase for an existence in which all the appliances to ease and enjoyment are supplied by a sort of magic, that never shows its machinery, nor lets you hear the sound of its working. The saddle-horses know when I want to ride by the same instinct that makes the butler give me the exact wine I wish at my dinner. And so on throughout the day, 'the sustained splendour' being an ever-present luxuriousness that I drink in with a thirst that knows no slaking.

'"I have made a hit with H. E., and from copying some rather muddle-headed despatches, I am now promoted to writing short skeleton sermons on politics, which, duly filled out and

fattened with official nutriment, will one day astonish the Irish Office, and make one of the Nestors of bureaucracy exclaim, 'See how Danesbury has got up the Irish question.'

'"I have a charming collaborateur, my lord's niece, who was acting as his private secretary up to the time of my arrival, and whose explanation of a variety of things I found to be so essential that, from being at first in the continual necessity of seeking her out, I have now arrived at a point at which we write in the same room, and pass our mornings in the library till luncheon. She is stunningly handsome, as tall as the Greek cousin, and with a stately grace of manner and a cold dignity of demeanour I'd give my heart's blood to subdue to a mood of womanly tenderness and dependence. Up to this, my position is that of a very humble courtier in the presence of a queen, and she takes care that by no momentary forgetfulness shall I lose sight of the 'situation.'

'"She is engaged, they say, to be married to Walpole; but as I have not heard that he is heir-apparent, or has even the reversion to the crown of Spain, I cannot perceive what the contract means.

'"I rode out with her to-day by special invitation, or permission —which was it?—and in the few words that passed between us, she asked me if I had long known Mr. Walpole, and put her horse into a canter without waiting for my answer.

'"With H. E. I can talk away freely, and without constraint. I am never very sure that he does not know the things he questions me on better than myself—a practice some of his order rather cultivate; but, on the whole, our intercourse is easy. I know he is not a little puzzled about me, and I intend that he should remain so.

'"When you have seen and spoken with Walpole, write me what has taken place between you; and though I am fully convinced that what you intend is unmitigated folly, I see so many difficulties in the way, such obstacles, and such almost impossibilities to be overcome, that I think Fate will be more merciful to you than your ambitions, and spare you, by an early defeat, from a crushing disappointment.

'"Had you ambitioned to be a governor of a colony, a bishop, or a Queen's messenger—they are the only irresponsible people I can think of—I might have helped you; but this conceit to be a Parliament man is such irredeemable folly, one is powerless to deal with it.

'"At all events, your time is not worth much, nor is your public character of a very grave importance. Give them both, then, freely to the effort, but do not let it cost you money, nor

let Donogan persuade you that you are one of those men who can make patriotism self-supporting.

'"H. E. hints at a very confidential mission on which he desires to employ me; and though I should leave this place now with much regret, and a more tender sorrow than I could teach you to comprehend, I shall hold myself at his orders for Japan if he wants me. Meanwhile, write to me what takes place with Walpole, and put your faith firmly in the good-will and efficiency of yours truly,

'"Joe Atlee.

'"If you think of taking Donogan down with you to Kilgobbin, I ought to tell you that it would be a mistake. Women invariably dislike him, and he would do you no credit."'

Dick Kearney, who had begun to read this letter aloud, saw himself constrained to continue, and went on boldly, without stop or hesitation, to the last word.

'I am very grateful to you, Mr. Kearney, for this mark of trustfulness, and I'm not in the least sore about all Joe has said of me.'

'He is not over complimentary to myself,' said Kearney, and the irritation he felt was not to be concealed.

'There's one passage in his letter,' said the other thoughtfully, 'well worth all the stress he lays on it. He tells you never to forget it "takes all sorts of men to make a party." Nothing can more painfully prove the fact than that we need Joe Atlee amongst ourselves! And it is true, Mr. Kearney,' said he sternly, 'treason must now, to have any chance at all, be many-handed. We want not only all sorts of men, but in all sorts of places; and at tables where rebel opinions dared not be boldly announced and defended, we want people who can coquet with felony, and get men to talk over treason with little if any ceremony. Joe can do this—he can write, and, what is better, sing you a Fenian ballad, and if he sees he has made a mistake, he can quiz himself and his song as cavalierly as he has sung it! And now, on my solemn oath I say it, I don't know that anything worse has befallen us than the fact that there are such men as Joe Atlee amongst us, and that we need them—ay, sir, we need them!'

'This is brief enough, at any rate,' said Kearney, as he broke open the second letter:—

Dublin Castle, *Wednesday Evening.*

'"Dear Sir,—Would you do me the great favour to call on me here at your earliest convenient moment? I am still an

invalid, and confined to a sofa, or would ask for permission to meet you at your chambers.—Believe me, yours faithfully,

'"CECIL WALPOLE."'

'That cannot be delayed, I suppose?' said Kearney, in the tone of a question.

'Certainly not.'

'I'll go up by the night-mail. You'll remain where you are, and where I hope you feel you are with a welcome.'

'I feel it, sir—I feel it more than I can say.' And his face was blood-red as he spoke.

'There are scores of things you can do while I am away. You'll have to study the county in all its baronies and sub-divisions. There, my sister can help you; and you'll have to learn the names and places of our great county swells, and mark such as may be likely to assist us. You'll have to stroll about in our own neighbourhood, and learn what the people near home say of the intention, and pick up what you can of public opinion in our towns of Moate and Kilbeggan.

'I have bethought me of all that——' He paused here and seemed to hesitate if he should say more; and after an effort, he went on: 'You'll not take amiss what I'm going to say, Mr. Kearney. You'll make full allowance for a man placed as I am; but I want, before you go, to learn from you in what way, or as what, you have presented me to your family? Am I a poor sizar of Trinity, whose hard struggle with poverty has caught your sympathy? Am I a chance acquaintance, whose only claim on you is being known to Joe Atlee? I'm sure I need not ask you, have you called me by my real name and given me my real character?'

Kearney flushed up to the eyes, and laying his hand on the other's shoulder, said, 'This is exactly what I have done. I have told my sister that you are the noted Daniel Donogan, United Irishman and rebel.'

'But only to your sister?'

'To none other.'

'*She*'ll not betray me, I know that.'

'You are right there, Donogan. Here's how it happened, for it was not intended.' And now he related how the name had escaped him.

'So that the cousin knows nothing?'

'Nothing whatever. My sister Kate is not one to make rash confidences, and you may rely on it she has not told her.'

'I hope and trust that this mistake will serve you for a lesson,

Mr. Kearney, and show you that to keep a secret, it is not enough to have an honest intention, but a man must have a watch over his thoughts and a padlock on his tongue. And now to something of more importance. In your meeting with Walpole, mind one thing: no modesty, no humility; make your demands boldly, and declare that your price is well worth the paying; let him feel that, as he must make a choice between the priests and the nationalists, we are the easier of the two to deal with: first of all, we don't press for prompt payment; and, secondly, we'll not shock Exeter Hall! Show him that strongly, and tell him that there are clever fellows amongst us who'll not compromise him or his party, and will never desert him on a close division. Oh dear me, how I wish I was going in your place.'

'So do I, with all my heart; but there's ten striking, and we shall be late for breakfast.'

CHAPTER XXX

THE MOATE STATION

The train by which Miss Betty O'Shea expected her nephew was late in its arrival at Moate, and Peter Gill, who had been sent with the car to fetch him over, was busily discussing his second supper when the passengers arrived.

'Are you Mr. Gorman O'Shea, sir?' asked Peter of a well-dressed and well-looking young man, who had just taken his luggage from the train.

'No; here he is,' replied he, pointing to a tall, powerful young fellow, whose tweed suit and billycock hat could not completely conceal a soldierlike bearing and a sort of compactness that comes of 'drill.'

'That's my name. What do you want with me?' cried he, in a loud but pleasant voice.

'Only that Miss Betty has sent me over with the car for your honour, if it's plazing to you to drive across.'

'What about this broiled bone, Miller?' asked O'Shea. 'I rather think I like the notion better than when you proposed it.'

'I suspect you do,' said the other; 'but we'll have to step over to the "Blue Goat." It's only a few yards off, and they'll be ready, for I telegraphed them from town to be prepared as the train came in.'

'You seem to know the place well.'

'Yes. I may say I know something about it. I canvassed

this part of the county once for one of the Idlers, and I secretly determined, if I ever thought of trying for a seat in the House, I'd make the attempt here. They are a most pretentious set of beggars these small townsfolk, and they'd rather hear themselves talk politics, and give their notions of what they think "good for Ireland," than actually pocket bank-notes; and that, my dear friend, is a virtue in a constituency never to be ignored or forgotten. The moment, then, I heard of M——'s retirement, I sent off a confidential emissary down here to get up what is called a requisition, asking me to stand for the county. Here it is, and the answer, in this morning's *Freeman*. You can read it at your leisure. Here we are now at the "Blue Goat"; and I see they are expecting us.'

Not only was there a capital fire in the grate, and the table ready laid for supper, but a half-dozen or more of the notabilities of Moate were in waiting to receive the new candidate, and confer with him over the coming contest.

'My companion is the nephew of an old neighbour of yours, gentlemen,' said Miller; 'Captain Gorman O'Shea, of the Imperial Lancers of Austria. I know you have heard of, if you have not seen him.'

A round of very hearty and demonstrative salutations followed, and Gorman was well pleased at the friendly reception accorded him.

Austria was a great country, one of the company observed. They had got liberal institutions and a free press, and they were good Catholics, who would give those heretical Prussians a fine lesson one of these days; and Gorman O'Shea's health, coupled with these sentiments, was drank with all the honours.

'There's a jolly old face that I ought to remember well,' said Gorman, as he looked up at the portrait of Lord Kilgobbin over the chimney. 'When I entered the service, and came back here on leave, he gave me the first sword I ever wore, and treated me as kindly as if I was his son.'

The hearty speech elicited no response from the hearers, who only exchanged significant looks with each other, while Miller, apparently less under restraint, broke in with, 'That stupid adventure the English newspapers called "The gallant resistance of Kilgobbin Castle" has lost that man the esteem of Irishmen.'

A perfect burst of approval followed these words; and while young O'Shea eagerly pressed for an explanation of an incident of which he heard for the first time, they one and all proceeded to give their versions of what had occurred; but with such contra-

dictions, corrections, and emendations that the young man might be pardoned if he comprehended little of the event.

'They say his son will contest the county with you, Mr. Miller,' cried one.

'Let me have no weightier rival, and I ask no more.'

'Faix, if he's going to stand,' said another, 'his father might have taken the trouble to ask us for our votes. Would you believe it, sir, it's going on six months since he put his foot in this room?'

'And do the "Goats" stand that?' asked Miller.

'I don't wonder he doesn't care to come into Moate. There's not a shop in the town he doesn't owe money to.'

'And we never refused him credit——'

'For anything but his principles,' chimed in an old fellow, whose oratory was heartily relished.

'He's going to stand in the National interest,' said one.

'That's the safe ticket when you have no money,' said another.

'Gentlemen,' said Miller, who rose to his legs to give greater importance to his address:—'If we want to make Ireland a country to live in, the only party to support is the Whig Government! The Nationalist may open the gaols, give licence to the press, hunt down the Orangemen, and make the place generally too hot for the English. But are these the things that you and I want or strive for? We want order and quietness in the land, and the best places in it for ourselves to enjoy these blessings. Is Mr. Casey down there satisfied to keep the post-office in Moate when he knows he could be the first secretary in Dublin, at the head office, with two thousand a year? Will my friend Mr. M'Gloin say that he'd rather pass his life here than be a Commissioner of Customs, and live in Merrion Square? Ain't we men? Ain't we fathers and husbands? Have we not sons to advance and daughters to marry in the world, and how much will Nationalism do for these?

'I will not tell you that the Whigs love us or have any strong regard for us; but they need us, gentlemen, and they know well that, without the Radicals, and Scotland, and our party here, they couldn't keep power for three weeks. Now why is Scotland a great and prosperous country? I'll tell you. Scotland has no sentimental politics. Scotland says, in her own homely adage, "Claw me and I'll claw thee." Scotland insists that there should be Scotchmen everywhere—in the Post-Office, in the Privy Council, in the Pipewater, and in the Punjab! Does Scotland go on vapouring about an extinct nationality or the right of the Stuarts? Not a bit of it. She says, Burn Scotch coal in the navy, though the smoke may blind you and you never

get up steam! She has no national absurdities: she neither asks for a flag nor a Parliament. She demands only what will pay. And it is by supporting the Whigs you will make Ireland as prosperous as Scotland. Literally, the Fenians, gentlemen, will never make my friend yonder a baronet, or put me on the Bench; and now that we are met here in secret committee, I can say all this to you and none of it get abroad.

'Mind, I never told you the Whigs love us, or said that we love the Whigs; but we can each of us help the other. When *they* smash the Protestant party, they are doing a fine stroke of work for Liberalism in pulling down a cruel ascendency and righting the Romanists. And when *we* crush the Protestants, we are opening the best places in the land to ourselves by getting rid of our only rivals. Look at the Bench, gentlemen, and the high offices of the courts. Have not we Papists, as they call us, our share in both? And this is only the beginning, let me tell you. There is a university in College Green due to us, and a number of fine palaces that their bishops once lived in, and grand old cathedrals whose very names show the rightful ownership; and when we have got all these—as the Whigs will give them one day—even then we are only beginning. And now turn the other side, and see what you have to expect from the Nationalists. Some very hard fighting and a great number of broken heads. I give in that you'll drive the English out, take the Pigeon-House Fort, capture the Magazine, and carry away the Lord-Lieutenant in chains. And what will you have for it, after all, but another scrimmage amongst yourselves for the spoils. Mr. Mullen, of the *Pike*, will want something that Mr. Darby M'Keown, of the *Convicted Felon*, has just appropriated; Tom Cassidy, that burned the Grand Master of the Orangemen, finds that he is not to be pensioned for life; and Phil Costigan, that blew up the Lodge in the Park, discovers that he is not even to get the ruins as building materials. I tell you, my friends, it's not in such convulsions as these that you and I, and other sensible men like us, want to pass our lives. We look for a comfortable berth and quarter-day; that's what we compound for—quarter-day—and I give it to you as a toast with all the honours.'

And certainly the rich volume of cheers that greeted the sentiment vouched for a hearty and sincere recognition of the toast.

'The chaise is ready at the door, councillor,' cried the landlord, addressing Mr. Miller, and after a friendly shake-hands all round, Miller slipped his arm through O'Shea's and drew him apart.

'I'll be back this way in about ten days or so, and I'll ask

you to present me to your aunt. She has got above a hundred votes on her property, and I think I can count upon you to stand by me.'

'I can, perhaps, promise you a welcome at the Barn,' muttered the young fellow in some confusion; 'but when you have seen my aunt, you'll understand why I give you no pledges on the score of political support.'

'Oh, is that the way?' asked Miller, with a knowing laugh.

'Yes, that's the way, and no mistake about it,' replied O'Shea, and they parted.

CHAPTER XXXI

HOW THE 'GOATS' REVOLTED

In less than a week after the events last related, the members of the 'Goat Club' were summoned to an extraordinary and general meeting, by an invitation from the vice-president, Mr. M'Gloin, the chief grocer and hardware dealer of Kilbeggan. The terms of this circular seemed to indicate importance, for it said—'To take into consideration a matter of vital interest to the society.'

Though only the denizen of a very humble country town, M'Gloin possessed certain gifts and qualities which might have graced a higher station. He was the most self-contained and secret of men; he detected mysterious meanings in every—the smallest—event of life; and as he divulged none of his discoveries, and only pointed vaguely and dimly to the consequences, he got credit for the correctness of his unuttered predictions as completely as though he had registered his prophecies as copyright at Stationers' Hall. It is needless to say that on every question, religious, social, or political, he was the paramount authority of the town. It was but rarely indeed that a rebellious spirit dared to set up an opinion in opposition to his; but if such a hazardous event were to occur, he would suppress it with a dignity of manner which derived no small aid from the resources of a mind rich in historical parallel; and it was really curious for those who believe that history is always repeating itself, to remark how frequently John M'Gloin represented the mind and character of Lycurgus, and how often poor old dreary, and bog-surrounded Moate recalled the image of Sparta and its 'sunny slopes.'

Now, there is one feature of Ireland which I am not quite sure is very generally known or appreciated on the other side of St. George's Channel, and this is the fierce spirit of indignation called

up in a county habitually quiet, when the newspapers bring it to public notice as the scene of some lawless violence. For once there is union amongst Irishmen. Every class, from the estated proprietor to the humblest peasant, is loud in asserting that the story is an infamous falsehood. Magistrates, priests, agents, middlemen, tax-gatherers, and tax-payers rush into print to abuse the 'blackguard'—he is always the blackguard—who invented the lie; and men upwards of ninety are quoted to show that so long as they could remember, there never was a man injured, nor a rick burned, nor a heifer hamstrung in the six baronies round! Old newspapers are adduced to show how often the going judge of assize has complimented the grand-jury on the catalogue of crime; in a word, the whole population is ready to make oath that the county is little short of a terrestrial paradise, and that it is a district teeming with gentle landlords, pious priests, and industrious peasants, without a plague-spot on the face of the county, except it be the police-barrack, and the company of lazy vagabonds with crossbelts and carbines that lounge before it. When, therefore, the press of Dublin at first, and afterwards of the empire at large, related the night attack for arms at Kilgobbin Castle, the first impulse of the county at large was to rise up in the face of the nation and deny the slander! Magistrates consulted together whether the high-sheriff should not convene a meeting of the county. Priests took counsel with the bishop, whether notice should not be taken of the calumny from the altar. The small shopkeepers of the small towns, assuming that their trade would be impaired by these rumours of disturbance—just as Parisians used to declaim against barricades in the streets—are violent in denouncing the malignant falsehoods upon a quiet and harmless community; so that, in fact, every rank and condition vied with its neighbour in declaring that the whole story was a base tissue of lies, and which could only impose upon those who knew nothing of the county, nor of the peaceful, happy, and brother-like creatures who inhabited it.

It was not to be supposed that, at such a crisis, Mr. John M'Gloin would be inactive or indifferent. As a man of considerable influence at elections, he had his weight with a county member, Mr. Price; and to him he wrote, demanding that he should ask in the House what correspondence had passed between Mr. Kearney and the Castle authorities with reference to this supposed outrage, and whether the law-officers of the Crown, or the adviser of the Viceroy, or the chiefs of the local police, or—to quote the exact words—'any sane or respectable man in the county' believed one word of the story. Lastly, that he would

also ask whether any and what correspondence had passed between Mr. Kearney and the Chief Secretary with respect to a small house on the Kilgobbin property, which Mr. Kearney had suggested as a convenient police-station, and for which he asked a rent of twenty-five pounds per annum; and if such correspondence existed, whether it had any or what relation to the rumoured attack on Kilgobbin Castle?

If it should seem strange that a leading member of the 'Goat Club' should assail its president, the explanation is soon made: Mr. M'Gloin had long desired to be the chief himself. He and many others had seen, with some irritation and displeasure, the growing indifference of Mr. Kearney for the 'Goats.' For many months he had never called them together, and several members had resigned, and many more threatened resignation. It was time, then, that some energetic steps should be taken. The opportunity for this was highly favourable. Anything unpatriotic, anything even unpopular in Kearney's conduct, would, in the then temper of the club, be sufficient to rouse them to actual rebellion; and it was to test this sentiment, and, if necessary, to stimulate it, Mr. M'Gloin convened a meeting, which a bylaw of the society enabled him to do at any period when, for the three preceding months, the president had not assembled the club.

Though the members generally were not a little proud of their president, and deemed it considerable glory to them to have a viscount for their chief, and though it gave great dignity to their debates that the rising speaker should begin 'My Lord and Buck Goat,' yet they were not without dissatisfaction at seeing how cavalierly he treated them, what slight value he appeared to attach to their companionship, and how perfectly indifferent he seemed to their opinions, their wishes, or their wants.

There were various theories in circulation to explain this change of temper in their chief. Some ascribed it to young Kearney, who was a 'stuck-up' young fellow, and wanted his father to give himself greater airs and pretensions. Others opinioned it was the daughter, who, though she played Lady Bountiful among the poor cottiers, and affected interest in the people, was in reality the proudest of them all. And last of all, there were some who, in open defiance of chronology, attributed the change to a post-dated event, and said that the swells from the Castle were the ruin of Mathew Kearney, and that he was never the same man since the day he saw them.

Whether any of these were the true solution of the difficulty or not, Kearney's popularity was on the decline at the moment when this unfortunate narrative of the attack on his castle aroused the

whole county and excited their feelings against him. Mr. M'Gloin took every step of his proceeding with due measure and caution: and having secured a certain number of promises of attendance at the meeting, he next notified to his lordship, how, in virtue of a certain section of a certain law, he had exercised his right of calling the members together; and that he now begged respectfully to submit to the chief, that some of the matters which would be submitted to the collective wisdom would have reference to the 'Buck Goat' himself, and that it would be an act of great courtesy on his part if he should condescend to be present and afford some explanation.

That the bare possibility of being called to account by the 'Goats' would drive Kearney into a ferocious passion, if not a fit of the gout, M'Gloin knew well; and that the very last thing on his mind would be to come amongst them, he was equally sure of: so that in giving his invitation there was no risk whatever. Mathew Kearney's temper was no secret; and whenever the necessity should arise that a burst of indiscreet anger should be sufficient to injure a cause, or damage a situation, 'the lord' could be calculated on with a perfect security. M'Gloin understood this thoroughly; nor was it matter of surprise to him that a verbal reply of 'There is no answer' was returned to his note; while the old servant, instead of stopping the ass-cart as usual for the weekly supply of groceries at M'Gloin's, repaired to a small shop over the way, where colonial products were rudely jostled out of their proper places by coils of rope, sacks of rape-seed, glue, glass, and leather, amid which the proprietor felt far more at home than amidst mixed pickles and mocha.

Mr. M'Gloin, however, had counted the cost of his policy: he knew well that for the ambition to succeed his lordship as Chief of the Club, he should have to pay by the loss of the Kilgobbin custom; and whether it was that the greatness in prospect was too tempting to resist, or that the sacrifice was smaller than it might have seemed, he was prepared to risk the venture.

The meeting was in so far a success that it was fully attended. Such a flock of 'Goats' had not been seen by them since the memory of man, nor was the unanimity less remarkable than the number; and every paragraph of Mr. M'Gloin's speech was hailed with vociferous cheers and applause, the sentiment of the assembly being evidently highly National, and the feeling that the shame which the Lord of Kilgobbin had brought down upon their county was a disgrace that attached personally to each man there present; and that if now their once happy and peaceful district was to be proclaimed under some tyranny of English law, or, worse still,

made a mark for the insult and sarcasm of the *Times* newspaper, they owed the disaster and the shame to no other than Mathew Kearney himself.

'I will now conclude with a resolution,' said M'Gloin, who, having filled the measure of allegation, proceeded to the application. 'I shall move that it is the sentiment of this meeting that Lord Kilgobbin be called on to disavow, in the newspapers, the whole narrative which has been circulated of the attack on his house; that he declare openly that the supposed incident was a mistake caused by the timorous fears of his household, during his own absence from home: terrors aggravated by the unwarrantable anxiety of an English visitor, whose ignorance of Ireland had worked upon an excited imagination; and that a copy of the resolution be presented to his lordship, either in letter or by a deputation, as the meeting shall decide.'

While the discussion was proceeding as to the mode in which this bold resolution should be most becomingly brought under Lord Kilgobbin's notice, a messenger on horseback arrived with a letter for M'Gloin. The bearer was in the Kilgobbin livery, and a massive seal, with the noble lord's arms, attested the despatch to be from himself.

'Shall I put the resolution to the vote, or read this letter first, gentlemen?' said the chairman.

'Read! read!' was the cry, and he broke the seal. It ran thus:—

'Mr. M'Gloin,—Will you please to inform the members of the "Goat Club" at Moate that I retire from the presidency, and cease to be a member of that society? I was vain enough to believe at one time that the humanising element of even one gentleman in the vulgar circle of a little obscure town, might have elevated the tone of manners and the spirit of social intercourse. I have lived to discover my great mistake, and that the leadership of a man like yourself is far more likely to suit the instincts and chime in with the sentiments of such a body.—Your obedient and faithful servant, Kilgobbin.'

The cry which followed the reading of this document can only be described as a howl. It was like the enraged roar of wild animals, rather than the union of human voices; and it was not till after a considerable interval that M'Gloin could obtain a hearing. He spoke with great vigour and fluency. He denounced the letter as an outrage which should be proclaimed from one end of Europe to the other; that it was not their town, or their club,

or themselves had been insulted, but Ireland! that this mock-lord (cheers)—this sham viscount—(greater cheers)—this Brummagem peer, whose nobility their native courtesy and natural urbanity had so long deigned to accept as real, should now be taught that his pretensions only existed on sufferance, and had no claim beyond the polite condescension of men whom it was no stretch of imagination to call the equals of Mathew Kearney. The cries that received this were almost deafening, and lasted for some minutes.

'Send the ould humbug his picture there,' cried a voice from the crowd, and the sentiment was backed by a roar of voices; and it was at once decreed the portrait should accompany the letter which the indignant 'Goats' now commissioned their chairman to compose.

That same evening saw the gold-framed picture on its way to Kilgobbin Castle, with an ample-looking document, whose contents we have no curiosity to transcribe—nor, indeed, is the whole incident one which we should have cared to obtrude upon our readers, save as a feeble illustration of the way in which the smaller rills of public opinion swell the great streams of life, and how the little events of existence serve now as impulses, now obstacles, to the larger interests that sway fortune. So long as Mathew Kearney drank his punch at the 'Blue Goat' he was a patriot and a Nationalist; but when he quarrelled with his flock, he renounced his Irishry, and came out a Whig.

CHAPTER XXXII

AN UNLOOKED-FOR PLEASURE

When Dick Kearney waited on Cecil Walpole at his quarters in the Castle, he was somewhat surprised to find that gentleman more reserved in manner, and in general more distant, than when he had seen him as his father's guest.

Though he extended two fingers of his hand on entering, and begged him to be seated, Walpole did not take a chair himself, but stood with his back to the fire—the showy skirts of a very gorgeous dressing-gown displayed over his arms—where he looked like some enormous bird exulting in the full effulgence of his bright plumage.

'You got my note, Mr. Kearney?' began he, almost before the other had sat down, with the air of a man whose time was too precious for mere politeness.

'It is the reason of my present visit,' said Dick dryly.

'Just so. His Excellency instructed me to ascertain in what shape most acceptable to your family he might show the sense entertained by the Government of that gallant defence of Kilgobbin; and believing that the best way to meet a man's wishes is first of all to learn what the wishes are, I wrote you the few lines of yesterday.'

'I suspect there must be a mistake somewhere,' began Kearney, with difficulty. 'At least, I intimated to Atlee the shape in which the Viceroy's favour would be most agreeable to us, and I came here prepared to find you equally informed on the matter.'

'Ah, indeed! I know nothing — positively nothing. Atlee telegraphed me, "See Kearney, and hear what he has to say. I write by post.—ATLEE." There's the whole of it.'

'And the letter——'

'The letter is there. It came by the late mail, and I have not opened it.'

'Would it not be better to glance over it now?' said Dick mildly.

'Not if you can give me the substance by word of mouth. Time, they tell us, is money, and as I have got very little of either, I am obliged to be parsimonious. What is it you want? I mean the sort of thing we could help you to obtain. I see,' said he, smiling, 'you had rather I should read Atlee's letter. Well, here goes.' He broke the envelope, and began:—

'"MY DEAR MR. WALPOLE,—I hoped by this time to have had a report to make you of what I had done, heard, seen, and imagined since my arrival, and yet here I am now towards the close of my second week, and I have nothing to tell; and beyond a sort of confused sense of being immensely delighted with my mode of life, I am totally unconscious of the flight of time.

'"His Excellency received me once for ten minutes and later on, after some days, for half an hour; for he is confined to bed with gout, and forbidden by his doctor all mental labour. He was kind and courteous to a degree, hoped I should endeavour to make myself at home—giving orders at the same time that my dinner should be served at my own hour, and the stables placed at my disposal, for riding or driving. For occupation, he suggested I should see what the newspapers were saying, and make a note or two if anything struck me as remarkable.

'"Lady Maude is charming—and I use the epithet in all the significance of its sorcery. She conveys to me each morning his Excellency's instructions for my day's work; and it is only by

a mighty effort I can tear myself from the magic thrill of her voice, and the captivation of her manner, to follow what I have to reply to, investigate, and remark on.

'"I meet her each day at luncheon, and she says she will join me 'some day at dinner.' When that glorious occasion arrives, I shall call it the event of my life, for her mere presence stimulates me to such effort in conversation that I feel in the very lassitude afterwards what a strain my faculties have undergone."'

'What an insufferable coxcomb, and an idiot to boot!' cried Walpole. 'I could not do him a more spiteful turn than to tell my cousin of her conquest. There is another page, I see, of the same sort. But here you are—this is all about you: I'll read it. "In *re* Kearney. The Irish are always logical; and as Miss Kearney once shot some of her countrymen, when on a mission they deemed National, her brother opines that he ought to represent the principles thus involved in Parliament."'

'Is this the way in which he states my claims?' broke in Dick, with ill-suppressed passion.

'Bear in mind, Mr. Kearney, this jest, and a very poor one it is, was meant for me alone. The communication is essentially private, and it is only through my indiscretion you know anything of it whatever.'

'I am not aware that any confidence should entitle him to write such an impertinence.'

'In that case, I shall read no more,' said Walpole, as he slowly refolded the letter. 'The fault is all on my side, Mr. Kearney,' he continued; 'but I own I thought you knew your friend so thoroughly that extravagance on his part could have neither astonished nor provoked you.'

'You are perfectly right, Mr. Walpole; I apologise for my impatience. It was, perhaps, in hearing his words read aloud by another that I forgot myself, and if you will kindly continue the reading, I will promise to behave more suitably in future.'

Walpole reopened the letter, but, whether indisposed to trust the pledge thus given, or to prolong the interview, ran his eyes over one side and then turned to the last page. 'I see,' said he, 'he augurs ill as to your chances of success; he opines that you have not well calculated the great cost of the venture, and that in all probability it has been suggested by some friend of questionable discretion. "At all events,"' and here he read aloud—'"at all events, his Excellency says, 'We should like to mark the Kilgobbin affair by some show of approbation; and though supporting young K. in a contest for his county is a "higher

figure" than we meant to pay, see him, and hear what he has to say of his prospects—what he can do to obtain a seat, and what he will do if he gets one. We need not caution him against'"—'hum, hum, hum,' muttered he, slurring over the words, and endeavouring to pass on to something else.

'May I ask against what I am supposed to be so secure?'

'Oh, nothing, nothing. A very small impertinence, but which Mr. Atlee found irresistible.'

'Pray let me hear it. It shall not irritate me.'

'He says, "There will be no more a fear of bribery in your case than of a debauch at Father Mathew's."'

'He is right there,' said Kearney. 'The only difference is that our forbearance will be founded on something stronger than a pledge.'

Walpole looked at the speaker, and was evidently struck by the calm command he had displayed of his passion.

'If we could forget Joe Atlee for a few minutes, Mr. Walpole, we might possibly gain something. I, at least, would be glad to know how far I might count on the Government aid in my project.'

'Ah, you want to——in fact, you would like that we should give you something like a regular——eh?—that is to say, that you could declare to certain people——naturally enough, I admit; but here is how we are, Kearney. Of course what I say now is literally between ourselves, and strictly confidential.'

'I shall so understand it,' said the other gravely.

'Well, now, here it is. The Irish vote, as the Yankees would call it, is of undoubted value to us, but it is confoundedly dear! With Cardinal Cullen on one side and Fenianism on the other, we have no peace. Time was when you all pulled the one way, and a sop to the Pope pleased you all. Now that will suffice no longer. The "Sovereign Pontiff dodge" is the surest of all ways to offend the Nationals; so that, in reality, what we want in the House is a number of Liberal Irishmen who will trust the Government to do as much for the Catholic Church as English bigotry will permit, and as much for the Irish peasant as will not endanger the rights of property over the Channel.'

'There's a wide field there, certainly,' said Dick, smiling.

'Is there not?' cried the other exultingly. 'Not only does it bowl over the Established Church and Protestant ascendency, but it inverts the position of landlord and tenant. To unsettle everything in Ireland, so that anybody might hope to be anything or to own Heaven knows what—to legalise gambling for existence to a people who delight in high play, and yet not involve us in a civil war—was a grand policy, Kearney, a very grand policy.

Not that I expect a young, ardent spirit like yourself, fresh from college ambitions and high-flown hopes, will take this view.

Dick only smiled and shook his head.

'Just so,' resumed Walpole. 'I could not expect you to like this programme, and I know already all that you allege against it; but, as B. says, Kearney, the man who rules Ireland must know how to take command of a ship in a state of mutiny, and yet never suppress the revolt. There's the problem—as much discipline as you can, as much indiscipline as you can bear. The brutal old Tories used to master the crew and hang the ring-leaders; and for that matter, they might have hanged the whole ship's company. We know better, Kearney; and we have so confused and addled them by our policy, that, if a fellow were to strike his captain, he would never be quite sure whether he was to be strung up at the gangway or made a petty-officer. Do you see it now?'

'I can scarcely say that I do see it—I mean, that I see it as *you* do.'

'I scarcely could hope that you should, or, at least, that you should do so at once; but now, as to this seat for King's County, I believe we have already found our man. I'll not be sure, nor will I ask you to regard the matter as fixed on, but I suspect we are in relations—you know what I mean—with an old supporter, who has been beaten half a dozen times in our interest, but is coming up once more. I'll ascertain about this positively, and let you know. And then'—here he drew breath freely and talked more at ease—'if we should find our hands free, and that we see our way clearly to support you, what assurance could you give us that you would go through with the contest, and fight the battle out?'

'I believe, if I engage in the struggle, I shall continue to the end,' said Dick, half doggedly.

'Your personal pluck and determination I do not question for a moment. Now, let us see'—here he seemed to ruminate for some seconds, and looked like one debating a matter with himself. 'Yes,' cried he at last, 'I believe that will be the best way. I am sure it will. When do you go back, Mr. Kearney—to Kilgobbin, I mean?'

'My intention was to go down the day after to-morrow.'

'That will be Friday. Let us see, what is Friday? Friday is the 15th, is it not?'

'Yes.'

'Friday'—muttered the other—'Friday? There's the Education Board, and the Harbour Commissioners, and something else

at——to be sure, a visit to the Popish schools with Dean O'Mahony. You couldn't make it Saturday, could you?'

'Not conveniently. I had already arranged a plan for Saturday. But why should I delay here—to what end?'

'Only that, if you could say Saturday, I would like to go down with you.'

From the mode in which he said these words, it was clear that he looked for an almost rapturous acceptance of his gracious proposal; but Dick did not regard the project in that light, nor was he overjoyed in the least at the proposal.

'I mean,' said Walpole, hastening to relieve the awkwardness of silence—'I mean that I could talk over this affair with your father in a practical business fashion, that you could scarcely enter into. Still, if Saturday could not be managed, I'll try if I could not run down with you on Friday. Only for a day, remember. I must return by the evening train. We shall arrive by what hour?'

'By breakfast-time,' said Dick, but still not over-graciously.

'Nothing could be better; that will give us a long day, and I should like a full discussion with your father. You'll manage to send me on to—what's the name?'

'Moate.'

'Moate. Yes; that's the place. The up-train leaves at midnight, I remember. Now that's all settled. You'll take me up, then, here on Friday morning, Kearney, on your way to the station, and meanwhile I'll set to work, and put off these deputations and circulars till Saturday, when, I remember, I have a dinner with the provost. Is there anything more to be thought of?'

'I believe not,' muttered Dick, still sullenly.

'Bye-bye, then, till Friday morning,' said he, as he turned towards his desk, and began arranging a mass of papers before him.

'Here's a jolly mess with a vengeance,' muttered Kearney, as he descended the stair. 'The Viceroy's private secretary to be domesticated with a "head-centre" and an escaped convict. There's not even the doubtful comfort of being able to make my family assist me through the difficulty.'

CHAPTER XXXIII

PLMNUDDM CASTLE, NORTH WALES

Among the articles of that wardrobe of Cecil Walpole's of which Atlee had possessed himself so unceremoniously, there was a very gorgeous blue dress-coat, with the royal button and a lining of sky-blue silk, which formed the appropriate costume of the gentlemen of the viceregal household. This, with a waistcoat to match, Atlee had carried off with him in the indiscriminating haste of a last moment, and although thoroughly understanding that he could not avail himself of a costume so distinctively the mark of a condition, yet, by one of the contrarieties of his strange nature, in which the desire for an assumption of any kind was a passion, he had tried on that coat fully a dozen times, and while admiring how well it became him, and how perfectly it seemed to suit his face and figure, he had dramatised to himself the part of an aide-de-camp in waiting, rehearsing the little speeches in which he presented this or that imaginary person to his Excellency, and coining the small money of epigram in which he related the news of the day.

'How I should cut out those dreary subalterns with their mess-room drolleries, how I should shame those tiresome cornets, whose only glitter is on their sabretaches!' muttered he, as he surveyed himself in his courtly attire. 'It is all nonsense to say that the dress a man wears can only impress the surrounders. It is on himself, on his own nature and temper, his mind, his faculties, his very ambition, there is a transformation effected; and I, Joe Atlee, feel myself, as I move about in this costume, a very different man from that humble creature in grey tweed, whose very coat reminds him he is a "cad," and who has but to look in the glass to read his condition.'

On the morning he learned that Lady Maude would join him that day at dinner, Atlee conceived the idea of appearing in this costume. It was not only that she knew nothing of the Irish Court and its habits, but she made an almost ostentatious show of her indifference to all about it, and in the few questions she asked, the tone of interrogation might have suited Africa as much as Ireland. It was true, she was evidently puzzled to know what place or condition Atlee occupied; his name was not familiar to her, and yet he seemed to know everything and everybody, enjoyed a large share of his Excellency's confidence, and appeared conversant with every detail placed before him.

That she would not directly ask him what place he occupied in the household he well knew, and he felt at the same time what a standing and position that costume would give him, what self-confidence and ease it would also confer, and how, for once in his life, free from the necessity of asserting a station, he could devote all his energies to the exercise of agreeability and those resources of small-talk in which he knew he was a master.

Besides all this, it was to be his last day at the castle—he was to start the next morning for Constantinople, with all instructions regarding the spy Speridionides, and he desired to make a favourable impression on Lady Maude before he left. Though intensely, even absurdly vain, Atlee was one of those men who are so eager for success in life that they are ever on the watch lest any weakness of disposition or temper should serve to compromise their chances, and in this way he was led to distrust what he would in his puppyism have liked to have thought a favourable effect produced by him on her ladyship. She was intensely cold in manner, and yet he had made her more than once listen to him with interest. She rarely smiled, and he had made her actually laugh. Her apathy appeared complete, and yet he had so piqued her curiosity that she could not forbear a question.

Acting as her uncle's secretary, and in constant communication with him, it was her affectation to imagine herself a political character, and she did not scruple to avow the hearty contempt she felt for the usual occupation of women's lives. Atlee's knowledge, therefore, actually amazed her: his hardihood, which never forsook him, enabled him to give her the most positive assurances on anything he spoke; and as he had already fathomed the chief prejudices of his Excellency, and knew exactly where and to what his political wishes tended, she heard nothing from her uncle but expressions of admiration for the just views, the clear and definite ideas, and the consummate skill with which that 'young fellow' distinguished himself.

'We shall have him in the House one of these days,' he would say; 'and I am much mistaken if he will not make a remarkable figure there.'

When Lady Maude sailed proudly into the library before dinner, Atlee was actually stunned by amazement at her beauty. Though not in actual evening-dress, her costume was that sort of demi-toilet compromise which occasionally is most becoming; and the tasteful lappet of Brussels lace, which, interwoven with her hair, fell down on either side so as to frame her face, softened its expression to a degree of loveliness he was not prepared for.

It was her pleasure—her caprice, perhaps—to be on this occasion unusually amiable and agreeable. Except by a sort of quiet dignity, there was no coldness, and she spoke of her uncle's health and hopes just as she might have discussed them with an old friend of the house.

When the butler flung wide the folding-doors into the dining-room and announced dinner, she was about to move on, when she suddenly stopped, and said, with a faint smile, 'Will you give me your arm?' Very simple words, and commonplace too, but enough to throw Atlee's whole nature into a convulsion of delight. And as he walked at her side it was in the very ecstasy of pride and exultation.

Dinner passed off with the decorous solemnity of that meal, at which the most emphatic utterances were the butler's 'Marco-brunner,' or 'Johannisberg.' The guests, indeed, spoke little, and the strangeness of their situation rather disposed to thought than conversation.

'You are going to Constantinople to-morrow, Mr. Atlee, my uncle tells me,' said she, after a longer silence than usual.

'Yes; his Excellency has charged me with a message, of which I hope to acquit myself well, though I own to my misgivings about it now.'

'You are too diffident, perhaps, of your powers,' said she; and there was a faint curl of the lip that made the words sound equivocally.

'I do not know if great modesty be amongst my failings,' said he laughingly. 'My friends would say not.'

'You mean, perhaps, that you are not without ambitions?'

'That is true. I confess to very bold ones.' And as he spoke he stole a glance towards her; but her pale face never changed.

'I wish, before you had gone, that you had settled that stupid muddle about the attack on—I forget the place.'

'Kilgobbin?'

'Yes, Kil-gobbin—horrid name!—for the Premier still persists in thinking there was something in it, and worrying my uncle for explanations; and as somebody is to ask something when Parliament meets, it would be as well to have a letter to read to the House.'

'In what sense, pray?' asked Atlee mildly.

'Disavowing all: stating the story had no foundation: that there was no attack—no resistance—no member of the viceregal household present at any time.'

'That would be going too far; for then we should next have to deny Walpole's broken arm and his long confinement to house.'

'You may serve coffee in a quarter of an hour, Marcom,' said she, dismissing the butler; and then, as he left the room—'And you tell me seriously there was a broken arm in this case?'

'I can hide nothing from you, though I have taken an oath to silence,' said he, with an energy that seemed to defy repression. 'I will tell you everything, though it's little short of a perjury, only premising this much, that I know nothing from Walpole himself.'

With this much of preface, he went on to describe Walpole's visit to Kilgobbin as one of those adventurous exploits which young Englishmen fancy they have a sort of right to perform in the less civilised country. 'He imagined, I have no doubt,' said he, 'that he was studying the condition of Ireland, and investigating the land question, when he carried on a fierce flirtation with a pretty Irish girl.'

'And there was a flirtation?'

'Yes, but nothing more. Nothing really serious at any time. So far he behaved frankly and well, for even at the outset of the affair he owned to—a what shall I call it?—an entanglement was, I believe, his own word—an entanglement in England——'

'Did he not state more of this entanglement, with whom it was, or how, or where?'

'I should think not. At all events, they who told me knew nothing of these details. They only knew as he said, that he was in a certain sense tied up, and that till Fate unbound him he was a prisoner.'

'Poor fellow, it *was* hard.'

'So *he* said, and so *they* believed him. Not that I myself believe he was ever seriously in love with the Irish girl.'

'And why not?'

'I may be wrong in my reading of him; but my impression is that he regards marriage as one of those solemn events which should contribute to a man's worldly fortune. Now an Irish connection could scarcely be the road to this.'

'What an ungallant admission,' said she, with a smile. 'I hope Mr. Walpole is not of your mind.' After a pause she said, 'And how was it that in your intimacy he told you nothing of this?'

He shook his head in dissent.

'Not even of the "entanglement"?'

'Not even of that. He would speak freely enough of his "egregious blunder," as he called it, in quitting his career and coming to Ireland; that it was a gross mistake for any man to take up Irish politics as a line in life; that they were puzzles in

'You wear a ring of great beauty—may I look at it?'

the present and lead to nothing in the future, and, in fact, that he wished himself back again in Italy every day he lived.'

'Was there any "entanglement" there also?'

'I cannot say. On these he made me no confidences.'

'Coffee, my lady!' said the butler, entering at this moment. Nor was Atlee grieved at the interruption.

'I am enough of a Turk,' said she laughingly, 'to like that muddy, strong coffee they give you in the East, and where the very smallness of the cups suggests its strength. You, I know, are impatient for your cigarette, Mr. Atlee, and I am about to liberate you.' While Atlee was muttering his assurances of how much he prized her presence, she broke in, 'Besides, I promised my uncle a visit before tea-time, and as I shall not see you again, I will wish you now a pleasant journey and a safe return.'

'Wish me success in my expedition,' said he eagerly.

'Yes, I will wish that also. One word more. I am very short-sighted, as you may see, but you wear a ring of great beauty. May I look at it?'

'It is pretty, certainly. It was a present Walpole made me. I am not sure that there is not a story attached to it, though I don't know it.'

'Perhaps it may be linked with the "entanglement,"' said she, laughing softly.

'For aught I know, so it may. Do you admire it?'

'Immensely,' said she, as she held it to the light.

'You can add immensely to its value if you will,' said he diffidently.

'In what way?'

'By keeping it, Lady Maude,' said he; and for once his cheek coloured with the shame of his own boldness.

'May I purchase it with one of my own? Will you have this, or this?' said she hurriedly.

'Anything that once was yours,' said he, in a mere whisper.

'Good-bye, Mr. Atlee.'

And he was alone!

CHAPTER XXXIV

AT TEA-TIME

The family at Kilgobbin Castle were seated at tea when Dick Kearney's telegram arrived. It bore the address, 'Lord Kilgobbin,' and ran thus: 'Walpole wishes to speak with you, and will come

down with me on Friday; his stay cannot be beyond one day.—RICHARD KEARNEY.'

'What can he want with me?' cried Kearney, as he tossed over the despatch to his daughter. 'If he wants to talk over the election, I could tell him per post that I think it a folly and an absurdity. Indeed, if he is not coming to propose for either my niece or my daughter, he might spare himself the journey.'

'Who is to say that such is not his intention, papa?' said Kate merrily. 'Old Catty had a dream about a piebald horse and a haystack on fire, and something about a creel of duck eggs, and I trust that every educated person knows what *they* mean.'

'I do not,' cried Nina boldly.

'Marriage, my dear. One is marriage by special licence, with a bishop or a dean to tie the knot; another is a runaway match. I forget what the eggs signify.'

'An unbroken engagement,' interposed Donogan gravely, 'so long as none of them are smashed.'

'On the whole, then, it is very promising tidings,' said Kate.

'It may be easy to be more promising than the election,' said the old man.

'I'm not flattered, uncle, to hear that I am easier to win than a seat in Parliament.'

'That does not imply you are not worth a great deal more,' said Kearney, with an air of gallantry. 'I know if I was a young fellow which I'd strive most for. Eh, Mr. Daniel? I see you agree with me.'

Donogan's face, slightly flushed before, became now crimson as he sipped his tea in confusion, unable to utter a word.

'And so,' resumed Kearney, 'he'll only give us a day to make up our minds! It's lucky, girls, that you have the telegram there to tell you what's coming.'

'It would have been more piquant, papa, if he had made his message say, "I propose for Nina. Reply by wire."'

'Or, "May I marry your daughter?" chimed in Nina quickly.

'There it is, now,' broke in Kearney, laughing, 'you're fighting for him already! Take my word for it, Mr. Daniel, there's no so sure way to get a girl for a wife, as to make her believe there's another only waiting to be asked. It's the threat of the opposition coach on the road keeps down the fares.'

'Papa is all wrong,' said Kate. 'There is no such conceivable pleasure as saying No to a man that another woman is ready to accept. It is about the most refined sort of self-flattery imaginable.'

'Not to say that men are utterly ignorant of that freemasonry

among women which gives us all an interest in the man who marries one of us,' said Nina. 'It is only your confirmed old bachelor that we all agree in detesting.'

''Faith, I give you up altogether. You're a puzzle clean beyond me,' said Kearney, with a sigh.

'I think it is Balzac tells us,' said Donogan, 'that women and politics are the only two exciting pursuits in life, for you never can tell where either of them will lead you.'

'And who is Balzac?' asked Kearney.

'Oh, uncle, don't let me hear you ask who is the greatest novelist that ever lived.'

''Faith, my dear, except *Tristram Shandy* and *Tom Jones*, and maybe *Robinson Crusoe*—if that be a novel—my experience goes a short way. When I am not reading what's useful—as in the *Farmer's Chronicle* or Purcell's *Rotation of Crops*—I like the "Accidents" in the newspapers, where they give you the name of the gentleman that was smashed in the train, and tell you how his wife was within ten days of her third confinement; how it was only last week he got a step as a clerk in Somerset House. Haven't you more materials for a sensation novel there, than any of your three-volume fellows will give you?'

'The times we are living in give most of us excitement enough,' said Donogan. 'The man who wants to gamble for life itself need not be balked now.'

'You mean that a man can take a shot at an emperor?' said Kearney inquiringly.

'No, not that exactly; though there are stakes of that kind some men would not shrink from. What are called "arms of precision" have had a great influence on modern politics. When there's no time for a plebiscite, there's always time for a pistol.'

'Bad morality, Mr. Daniel,' said Kearney gravely.

'I suspect we do not fairly measure what Mr. Daniel says,' broke in Kate. 'He may mean to indicate a revolution, and not justify it.'

'I mean both!' said Donogan. 'I mean that the mere permission to live under a bad government is too high a price to pay for life at all. I'd rather go "down into the streets," as they call it, and have it out, than I'd drudge on, dogged by policemen, and sent to gaol on suspicion.'

'He is right,' cried Nina. 'If I were a man, I'd think as he does.'

'Then I'm very glad you're not,' said Kearney; 'though, for the matter of rebellion, I believe you would be a more dangerous Fenian as you are. Am I right, Mr. Daniel?'

'I am disposed to say you are, sir,' was his mild reply.

'Ain't we important people this evening!' cried Kearney, as the servant entered with another telegram. 'This is for you, Mr. Daniel. I hope we're to hear that the Cabinet wants you in Downing Street.'

'I'd rather it did not,' said he, with a very peculiar smile, which did not escape Kate's keen glance across the table, as he said, 'May I read my despatch?'

'By all means,' said Kearney; while, to leave him more undisturbed, he turned to Nina, with some quizzical remark about her turn for the telegraph coming next. 'What news would you wish it should bring you, Nina?' asked he.

'I scarcely know. I have so many things to wish for, I should be puzzled which to place first.'

'Should you like to be Queen of Greece?' asked Kate.

'First tell me if there is to be a King, and who is he?'

'Maybe it's Mr. Daniel there, for I see he has gone off in a great hurry to say he accepts the crown.'

'What should you ask for, Kate,' cried Nina, 'if Fortune were civil enough to give you a chance?'

'Two days' rain for my turnips,' said Kate quickly. 'I don't remember wishing for anything so much in all my life.'

'Your turnips!' cried Nina contemptuously.

'Why not? If you were a queen, would you not have to think of those who depended on you for support and protection? And how should I forget my poor heifers and my calves—calves of very tender years some of them—and all with as great desire to fatten themselves as any of us have to do what will as probably lead to our destruction?'

'You're not going to have the rain, anyhow,' said Kearney, 'and you'll not be sorry, Nina, for you wanted a fine day to finish your sketch of Croghan Castle.'

'Oh! by the way, has old Bob recovered from his lameness yet, to be fit to be driven?'

'Ask Kitty there; she can tell you, perhaps.'

'Well, I don't think I'd harness him yet. The smith has pinched him in the off fore-foot, and he goes tender still.'

'So do I when I go afoot, for I hate it,' cried Nina; 'and I want a day in the open air, and I want to finish my old Castle of Croghan—and last of all,' whispered she in Kate's ear, 'I want to show my distinguished friend Mr. Walpole that the prospect of a visit from him does not induce me to keep the house. So that, from all the wants put together, I shall take an early breakfast, and start to-morrow for Cruhan—is not that the name of the little village in the bog?'

'That's Miss Betty's own townland—though I don't know she's much the richer of her tenants,' said Kearney, laughing. 'The oldest inhabitants never remember a rent-day.'

'What a happy set of people!'

'Just the reverse. You never saw misery till you saw them. There is not a cabin fit for a human being, nor is there one creature in the place with enough rags to cover him.'

'They were very civil as I drove through. I remember how a little basket had fallen out, and a girl followed me ten miles of the road to restore it,' said Nina.

'That they would; and if it were a purse of gold they'd have done the same,' cried Kate.

'Won't you say that they'd shoot you for half a crown, though?' said Kearney, 'and that the worst "Whiteboys" of Ireland come out of the same village?'

'I do like a people so unlike all the rest of the world,' cried Nina; 'whose motives none can guess at, none forecast. I'll go there to-morrow.'

These words were said as Daniel had just re-entered the room, and he stopped and asked, 'Where to?'

'To a Whiteboy village called Cruhan, some ten miles off, close to an old castle I have been sketching.'

'Do you mean to go there to-morrow?' asked he, half-carelessly; but not waiting for her answer, and as if fully preoccupied he turned and left the room.

CHAPTER XXXV

A DRIVE AT SUNRISE

The little basket-carriage in which Nina made her excursions, and which courtesy called a phaeton, would scarcely have been taken as a model at Long Acre. A massive old wicker-cradle constituted the body, which, from a slight inequality in the wheels, had got an uncomfortable 'lurch to port,' while the rumble was supplied by a narrow shelf, on which her foot-page sat *dos-à-dos* to herself—a position not rendered more dignified by his invariable habit of playing pitch-and-toss with himself, as a means of distraction in travel.

Except Bob, the sturdy little pony in the shafts, nothing could be less schooled or disciplined than Larry himself. At sight of a party at marbles or hopscotch, he was sure to desert his post, trusting to short cuts and speed to catch up his mistress later on.

As for Bob, a tuft of clover or fresh grass on the road-side were temptations to the full as great to him, and no amount of whipping could induce him to continue his road leaving these dainties untasted. As in Mr. Gill's time, he had carried that important personage, he had contracted the habit of stopping at every cabin by the way, giving to each halt the amount of time he believed the colloquy should have occupied, and then, without any admonition, resuming his journey. In fact, as an index to the refractory tenants on the estate, his mode of progression, with its interruptions, might have been employed, and the sturdy fashion in which he would 'draw up' at certain doors might be taken as the forerunner of an ejectment.

The blessed change by which the county saw the beast now driven by a beautiful young lady, instead of bestrode by an inimical bailiff, added to a popularity which Ireland in her poorest and darkest hour always accords to beauty; and they, indeed, who trace points of resemblance between two distant peoples, have not failed to remark that the Irish, like the Italians, invariably refer all female loveliness to that type of surpassing excellence, the Madonna.

Nina had too much of the South in her blood not to like the heartfelt, outspoken admiration which greeted her as she went; and the 'God bless you—but you are a lovely crayture!' delighted, while it amused her in the way the qualification was expressed.

It was soon after sunrise on this Friday morning that she drove down the approach, and made her way across the bog towards Cruhan. Though pretending to her uncle to be only eager to finish her sketch of Croghan Castle, her journey was really prompted by very different considerations. By Dick's telegram she learned that Walpole was to arrive that day at Kilgobbin, and as his stay could not be prolonged beyond the evening, she secretly determined she would absent herself so much as she could from home—only returning to a late dinner—and thus show her distinguished friend how cheaply she held the occasion of his visit, and what value she attached to the pleasure of seeing him at the castle.

She knew Walpole thoroughly—she understood the working of such a nature to perfection, and she could calculate to a nicety the mortification, and even anger, such a man would experience at being thus slighted. 'These men,' thought she, 'only feel for what is done to them before the world: it is the insult that is passed upon them in public, the *soufflet* that is given in the street, that alone can wound them to the quick.' A woman may grow

tired of their attentions, become capricious and change, she may be piqued by jealousy, or, what is worse, by indifference; but, while she makes no open manifestation of these, they can be borne: the really insupportable thing is, that a woman should be able to exhibit a man as a creature that had no possible concern or interest for her—one might come or go, or stay on, utterly unregarded or uncared for. To have played this game during the long hours of a long day was a burden she did not fancy to encounter, whereas to fill the part for the short space of a dinner, and an hour or so in the drawing-room, she looked forward to rather as an exciting amusement.

'He has had a day to throw away,' said she to herself, 'and he will give it to the Greek girl. I almost hear him as he says it. How one learns to know these men in every nook and crevice of their natures, and how by never relaxing a hold on the one clue of their vanity, one can trace every emotion of their lives.'

In her old life of Rome these small jealousies, these petty passions of spite, defiance, and wounded sensibility, filled a considerable space of her existence. Her position in society, dependent as she was, exposed her to small mortifications: the cold semi-contemptuous notice of women who saw she was prettier than themselves, and the half-swaggering carelessness of the men, who felt that a bit of flirtation with the Titian Girl was as irresponsible a thing as might be.

'But here,' thought she, 'I am the niece of a man of recognised station; I am treated in his family with a more than ordinary deference and respect—his very daughter would cede the place of honour to me, and my will is never questioned. It is time to teach this pretentious fine gentleman that our positions are not what they once were. If I were a man, I should never cease till I had fastened a quarrel on him; and being a woman, I could give my love to the man who would avenge me. Avenge me of what? a mere slight, a mood of impertinent forgetfulness—nothing more—as if anything could be more to a woman's heart! A downright wrong can be forgiven, an absolute injury pardoned—one is raised to self-esteem by such an act of forgiveness; but there is no elevation in submitting patiently to a slight. It is simply the confession that the liberty taken with you was justifiable—was even natural.'

These were the sum of her thoughts as she went, ever recurring to the point how Walpole would feel offended by her absence, and how such a mark of her indifference would pique his vanity, even to insult.

Then she pictured to her mind how this fine gentleman would

feel the boredom of that dreary day. True, it would be but a day; but these men were not tolerant of the people who made time pass heavily with them, and they revenged their own ennui on all around them. How he would snub the old man for the son's pretensions, and sneer at the young man for his disproportioned ambition; and last of all, how he would mystify poor Kate, till she never knew whether he cared to fatten calves and turkeys, or was simply drawing her on to little details, which he was to dramatise one day in an after-dinner story.

She thought of the closed pianoforte, and her music on the top—the songs he loved best; she had actually left Mendelssohn there to be seen—a very bait to awaken his passion. She thought she actually saw the fretful impatience with which he threw the music aside and walked to the window to hide his anger.

'This excursion of Mademoiselle Nina was then a sudden thought, you tell me; only planned last night? And is the country considered safe enough for a young lady to go off in this fashion? Is it secure—is it decent? I know he will ask, "is it decent?" Kate will not feel—she will not see the impertinence with which he will assure her that she herself may be privileged to do these things; that her "Irishry" was itself a safeguard, but Dick will notice the sneer. Oh, if he would but resent it! How little hope there is of that. These young Irishmen get so overlaid by the English in early life, they never resist their dominance: they accept everything in a sort of natural submission. I wonder does the rebel sentiment make them any bolder?' And then she bethought her of some of those national songs Mr. Daniel had been teaching her, and which seemed to have such an overwhelming influence over his passionate nature. She had even seen the tears in his eyes, and twice he could not speak to her with emotion. What a triumph it would have been to have made the high-bred Mr. Walpole feel in this wise. Possibly at the moment, the vulgar Fenian seemed the finer fellow. Scarcely had the thought struck her, than there, about fifty yards in advance, and walking at a tremendous pace, was the very man himself.

'Is not that Mr. Daniel, Larry?' asked she quickly.

But Larry had already struck off on a short cut across the bog, and was miles away.

Yes, it could be none other than Mr. Daniel. The coat thrown back, the loose-stepping stride, and the occasional flourish of the stick as he went, all proclaimed the man. The noise of the wheels on the hard road made him turn his head; and now,

seeing who it was, he stood uncovered till she drove up beside him.

'Who would have thought to see you here at this hour?' said he, saluting her with deep respect.

'No one is more surprised at it than myself,' said she, laughing; 'but I have a partly-done sketch of an old castle, and I thought in this fine autumn weather I should like to throw in the colour. And besides, there are now and then with me unsocial moments when I fancy I like to be alone. Do you know what these are?'

'Do I know?—too well.'

'These motives then, not to think of others, led me to plan this excursion; and now will you be as candid, and say what is *your* project?'

'I am bound for a little village called Cruhan: a very poor, unenticing spot; but I want to see the people there, and hear what they say of these rumours of new laws about the land.'

'And can *they* tell you anything that would be likely to interest *you*?'

'Yes, their very mistakes would convey their hopes; and hopes have come to mean a great deal in Ireland.'

'Our roads are then the same. I am on my way to Croghan Castle.'

'Croghan is but a mile from my village of Cruhan,' said he.

'I am aware of that, and it was in your village of Cruhan, as you call it, I meant to stable my pony till I had finished my sketch; but my gentle page, Larry, I see, has deserted me; I don't know if I shall find him again.'

'Will you let me be your groom? I shall be at the village almost as soon as yourself, and I 'll look after your pony.'

'Do you think you could manage to seat yourself on that shelf at the back?'

'It is a great temptation you offer me, if I were not ashamed to be a burden.'

'Not to me, certainly; and as for the pony, I scarcely think he 'll mind it.'

'At all events, I shall walk the hills.'

'I believe there are none. If I remember aright, it is all through a level bog.'

'You were at tea last night when a certain telegram came?'

'To be sure I was. I was there, too, when one came for you, and saw you leave the room immediately after.'

'In evident confusion?' added he, smiling.

'Yes, I should say, in evident confusion. At least, you looked like one who had got some very unexpected tidings.'

'So it was. There is the message.' And he drew from his pocket a slip of paper, with the words, 'Walpole is coming for a day. Take care to be out of the way till he is gone.'

'Which means that he is no friend of yours.'

'He is neither friend nor enemy. I never saw him; but he is the private secretary, and, I believe, the nephew of the Viceroy, and would find it very strange company to be domiciled with a rebel.'

'And you are a rebel?'

'At your service, Mademoiselle Kostalergi.'

'And a Fenian, and head-centre?'

'A Fenian and a head-centre.'

'And probably ought to be in prison?'

'I have been already, and as far as the sentence of English law goes, should be still there.'

'How delighted I am to know that. I mean, what a thrilling sensation it is to be driving along with a man so dangerous, that the whole country would be up and in pursuit of him at a mere word.'

'That is true. I believe I should be worth a few hundred pounds to any one who would capture me. I suspect it is the only way I could turn to valuable account.'

'What if I were to drive you into Moate and give you up?'

'You might. I'll not run away.'

'I should go straight to the Podestà, or whatever he is, and say, "Here is the notorious Daniel Donogan, the rebel you are all afraid of."'

'How came you by my name?' asked he curtly.

'By accident. I overheard Dick telling it to his sister. It dropped from him unawares, and I was on the terrace and caught the words.'

'I am in your hands completely,' said he, in the same calm voice; 'but I repeat my words: I'll not run away.'

'That is, because you trust to my honour.'

'It is exactly so—because I trust to your honour.'

'But how if I were to have strong convictions in opposition to all you were doing—how if I were to believe that all you intended was a gross wrong and a fearful cruelty?'

'Still you would not betray me. You would say, "This man is an enthusiast—he imagines scores of impossible things—but, at least, he is not a self-seeker—a fool possibly, but not a knave. It would be hard to hang him."'

'So it would. I have just thought *that*.'

'And then you might reason thus: "How will it serve the other cause to send one poor wretch to the scaffold, where there are so many just as deserving of it?"'

'And are there many?'

'I should say close on two millions at home here, and some hundred thousand in America.'

'And if you be as strong as you say, what craven creatures you must be not to assert your own convictions.'

'So we are—I'll not deny it—craven creatures; but remember this, mademoiselle, we are not all like-minded. Some of us would be satisfied with small concessions, some ask for more, some demand all; and as the Government higgles with some, and hangs the others, they mystify us all, and end by confounding us.'

'That is to say, you are terrified.'

'Well, if you like that word better, I'll not quarrel about it.'

'I wonder how men as irresolute ever turn to rebellion. When our people set out for Crete, they went in another spirit to meet the enemy.'

'Don't be too sure of that. The boldest fellows in that exploit were the liberated felons: they fought with desperation, for they had left the hangman behind.'

'How dare you defame a great people!' cried she angrily.

'I was with them, mademoiselle. I saw them and fought amongst them; and to prove it, I will speak modern Greek with you, if you like it.'

'Oh, do!' said she. 'Let me hear those noble sounds again, though I shall be sadly at a loss to answer you. I have been years and years away from Athens.'

'I know that. I know your story from one who loved to talk of you, all unworthy as he was of such a theme.'

'And who was this?'

'Atlee—Joe Atlee, whom you saw here some months ago.'

'I remember him,' said she thoughtfully.

'He was here, if I mistake not, with that other friend of yours you have so strangely escaped from to-day.'

'Mr. Walpole?'

'Yes, Mr. Walpole; to meet whom would not have involved *you*, at least, in any contrariety.'

'Is this a question, sir? Am I to suppose your curiosity asks an answer here?'

'I am not so bold; but I own my suspicions have mastered my discretion, and, seeing you here this morning, I did think you did not care to meet him.'

'Well, sir, you were right. I am not sure that *my* reasons for avoiding him were exactly as strong as *yours*, but they sufficed for *me*.'

There was something so like reproof in the way these words were uttered that Donogan had not courage to speak for some time after. At last he said, 'In one thing, your Greeks have an immense advantage over us here. In your popular songs you could employ your own language, and deal with your own wrongs in the accents that became them. *We* had to take the tongue of the conqueror, which was as little suited to our traditions as to our feelings, and travestied both. Only fancy the Greek vaunting his triumphs or bewailing his defeats in Turkish!'

'What do you know of Mr. Walpole?' asked she abruptly.

'Very little beyond the fact that he is an agent of the Government, who believes that he understands the Irish people.'

'Which you are disposed to doubt?'

'I only know that I am an Irishman, and I do not understand them. An organ, however, is not less an organ that it has many "stops."'

'I am not sure Cecil Walpole does not read you aright. He thinks that you have a love of intrigue and plot, but without the conspirator element that Southern people possess; and that your native courage grows impatient at the delays of mere knavery, and always betrays you.'

'That distinction was never *his*—that was your own.'

'So it was; but he adopted it when he heard it.'

'That is the way the rising politician is educated,' cried Donogan. 'It is out of these petty thefts he makes all his capital, and the poor people never suspect how small a creature can be their millionaire.'

'Is not that our village yonder, where I see the smoke?'

'Yes; and there on the stile sits your little groom awaiting you. I shall get down here.'

'Stay where you are, sir. It is by your blunder, not by your presence, that you might compromise me.' And this time her voice caught a tone of sharp severity that suppressed reply.

CHAPTER XXXVI

THE EXCURSION

The little village of Cruhan-bawn, into which they now drove, was, in every detail of wretchedness, dirt, ruin, and desolation,

intensely Irish. A small branch of the well-known bog-stream, the 'Brusna,' divided one part of the village from the other, and between these two settlements so separated there raged a most rancorous hatred and jealousy, and Cruhan-beg, as the smaller collection of hovels was called, detested Cruhan-bawn with an intensity of dislike that might have sufficed for a national antipathy, where race, language, and traditions had contributed their aids to the animosity.

There was, however, one real and valid reason for this inveterate jealousy. The inhabitants of Cruhan-beg—who lived, as they said themselves, 'beyond the river'—strenuously refused to pay any rent for their hovels; while 'the cis-Brusnaites,' as they may be termed, demeaned themselves to the condition of tenants in so far as to acknowledge the obligation of rent, though the oldest inhabitant vowed he had never seen a receipt in his life, nor had the very least conception of a gale-day.

If, therefore, actually, there was not much to separate them on the score of principle, they were widely apart in theory, and the sturdy denizens of the smaller village looked down upon the others as the ignoble slaves of a Saxon tyranny. The village in its entirety—for the division was a purely local and arbitrary one—belonged to Miss Betty O'Shea, forming the extreme edge of her estate as it merged into the vast bog; and, with the habitual fate of frontier populations, it contained more people of lawless lives and reckless habits than were to be found for miles around. There was not a resource of her ingenuity she had not employed for years back to bring these refractory subjects into the pale of a respectable tenantry. Every process of the law had been essayed in turn. They had been hunted down by the police, unroofed, and turned into the wide bog; their chattels had been 'canted,' and themselves—a last resource—cursed from the altar; but with that strange tenacity that pertains to life where there is little to live for, these creatures survived all modes of persecution, and came back into their ruined hovels to defy the law and beard the Church, and went on living—in some strange, mysterious way of their own—an open challenge to all political economy, and a sore puzzle to the *Times* commissioner when he came to report on the condition of the cottier in Ireland.

At certain seasons of county excitement—such as an election or an unusually weighty assizes—it was not deemed perfectly safe to visit the village, and even the police would not have adventured on the step except with a responsible force. At other periods, the most marked feature of the place would be that of utter vacuity and desolation. A single inhabitant here and there

smoking listlessly at his door—a group of women, with their arms concealed beneath their aprons, crouching under a ruined wall—or a few ragged children, too miserable and dispirited even for play, would be all that would be seen.

At a spot where the stream was fordable for a horse, the page Larry had already stationed himself, and now walked into the river, which rose over his knees, to show the road to his mistress.

'The bailiffs is on them to-day,' said he, with a gleeful look in his eye; for any excitement, no matter at what cost to others, was intensely pleasurable to him.

'What is he saying?' asked Nina.

'They are executing some process of law against these people,' muttered Donogan. 'It's an old story in Ireland; but I had as soon you had been spared the sight.'

'Is it quite safe for yourself?' whispered she. 'Is there not some danger in being seen here?'

'Oh, if I could but think that you cared—I mean ever so slightly,' cried he, with fervour, 'I'd call this moment of my danger the proudest of my life!'

Though declarations of this sort—more or less sincere as chance might make them—were things Nina was well used to, she could not help marking the impassioned manner of him who now spoke, and bent her eyes steadily on him.

'It is true,' said he, as if answering the interrogation in her gaze. 'A poor outcast as I am—a rebel—a felon—anything you like to call me—the slightest show of your interest in me gives my life a value, and my hope a purpose I never knew till now.'

'Such interest would be but ill-bestowed if it only served to heighten your danger. Are you known here?'

'He who has stood in the dock, as I have, is sure to be known by some one. Not that the people would betray me. There is poverty and misery enough in that wretched village, and yet there's not one so hungry or so ragged that he would hand me over to the law to make himself rich for life.'

'Then what do you mean to do?' asked she hurriedly.

'Walk boldly through the village at the head of your pony, as I am now—your guide to Croghan Castle.'

'But we were to have stabled the beast here. I intended to have gone on foot to Croghan.'

'Which you cannot now. Do you know what English law is, lady?' cried he fiercely. 'This pony and this carriage, if they had shelter here, are confiscated to the landlord for his rent. It's

little use to say *you* owe nothing to this owner of the soil; it 's enough that they are found amongst the chattels of his debtors.'

'I cannot believe this is law.'

'You can prove it—at the loss of your pony; and it is mercy and generous dealing when compared with half the enactments our rulers have devised for us. Follow me. I see the police have not yet come down. I will go on in front and ask the way to Croghan.'

There was that sort of peril in the adventure now that stimulated Nina and excited her; and as they stoutly wended their way through the crowd, she was far from insensible to the looks of admiration that were bent on her from every side.

'What are they saying?' asked she; 'I do not know their language.'

'It is Irish,' said he; 'they are talking of your beauty.'

'I should so like to follow their words,' said she, with the smile of one to whom such homage had ever its charm.

'That wild-looking fellow, that seemed to utter an imprecation, has just pronounced a fervent blessing; what he has said was, "May every glance of your eye be a candle to light you to glory."'

A half-insolent laugh at this conceit was all Nina's acknowledgment of it. Short greetings and good wishes were now rapidly exchanged between Donogan and the people, as the little party made their way through the crowd—the men standing bareheaded, and the women uttering words of admiration, some even crossing themselves piously, at sight of such loveliness, as, to them, recalled the ideal of all beauty.

'The police are to be here at one o'clock,' said Donogan, translating a phrase of one of the bystanders.

'And is there anything for them to seize on?' asked she.

'No; but they can level the cabins,' cried he bitterly. 'We have no more right to shelter than to food.'

Moody and sad, he walked along at the pony's head, and did not speak another word till they had left the village far behind them.

Larry, as usual, had found something to interest him, and dropped behind in the village, and they were alone.

A passing countryman, to whom Donogan addressed a few words in Irish, told them that a short distance from Croghan they could stable the pony at a small 'shebeen.'

On reaching this, Nina, who seemed to have accepted Donogan's companionship without further question, directed him to unpack the carriage and take out her easel and her drawing materials. 'You 'll have to carry these—fortunately not very far, though,'

said she, smiling, 'and then you'll have to come back here and fetch this basket.'

'It is a very proud slavery—command me how you will,' muttered he, not without emotion.

'That,' continued she, pointing to the basket, 'contains my breakfast, and luncheon or dinner, and I invite you to be my guest.'

'And I accept with rapture. Oh!' cried he passionately, 'what whispered to my heart this morning that this would be the happiest day of my life!'

'If so, Fate has scarcely been generous to you.' And her lip curled half superciliously as she spoke.

'I'd not say that. I have lived amidst great hopes, many of them dashed, it is true, by disappointment; but who that has been cheered by glorious day-dreams has not tasted moments at least of exquisite bliss?'

'I don't know that I have much sympathy with political ambitions,' said she pettishly.

'Have you tasted—have you tried them? Do you know what it is to feel the heart of a nation throb and beat?—to know that all that love can do to purify and elevate, can be exercised for the countless thousands of one's own race and lineage, and to think that long after men have forgotten your name, some heritage of freedom will survive to say that there once lived one who loved his country.'

'This is very pretty enthusiasm.'

'Oh, how is it that you, who can stimulate one's heart to such confessions, know nothing of the sentiment?'

'I have my ambitions,' said she coldly, almost sternly.

'Let me hear some of them.'

'They are not like yours, though they are perhaps just as impossible.' She spoke in a broken, unconnected manner, like one who was talking aloud the thoughts that came laggingly; then with a sudden earnestness she said, 'I'll tell you one of them. It's to catch the broad bold light that has just beat on the old castle there, and brought out all its rich tints of greys and yellows in such a glorious wealth of colour. Place my easel here, under the trees; spread that rug for yourself to lie on. No—you won't have it? Well, fold it neatly, and place it there for my feet: very nicely done. And now, Signor Ribello, you may unpack that basket, and arrange our breakfast, and when you have done all these, throw yourself down on the grass, and either tell me a pretty story, or recite some nice verses for me, or be otherwise amusing and agreeable.'

'True, there is no tender light there,' muttered he, gazing at her eyes.

'Shall I do what will best please myself? If so, it will be to lie here and look at you.'

'Be it so,' said she, with a sigh. 'I have always thought, in looking at them, how saints are bored by being worshipped—it adds fearfully to martyrdom, but happily I am used to it. "Oh, the vanity of that girl!" Yes, sir, say it out: tell her frankly that if she has no friend to caution her against this besetting wile, that you will be that friend. Tell her that whatever she has of attraction is spoiled and marred by this self-consciousness, and that just as you are a rebel without knowing it, so should she be charming and never suspect it. Is not that coming nicely,' said she, pointing to the drawing; 'see how that tender light is carried down from those grey walls to the banks beneath, and dies away in that little pool, where the faintest breath of air is rustling. Don't look at me, sir, look at my drawing.'

'True, there is no tender light there,' muttered he, gazing at her eyes, where the enormous size of the pupils had given a character of steadfast brilliancy, quite independent of shape, or size, or colour.

'You know very little about it,' said she saucily; then, bending over the drawing, she said, 'That middle distance wants a bit of colour: you shall aid me here.'

'How am I to aid you?' asked he, in sheer simplicity.

'I mean that you should be that bit of colour. There, take my scarlet cloak, and perch yourself yonder on that low rock. A few minutes will do. Was there ever immortality so cheaply purchased! Your biographer shall tell that you were the figure in that famous sketch—what will be called in the cant of art, one of Nina Kostalergi's earliest and happiest efforts. There, now, dear Mr. Donogan, do as you are bid.'

'Do you know the Greek ballad, where a youth remembers that the word "dear" has been coupled with his name—a passing courtesy, if even so much, but enough to light up a whole chamber in his heart?'

'I know nothing of Greek ballads. How does it go?'

'It is a simple melody, in a low key.' And he sang, in a deep but tremulous voice, to a very plaintive air—

'I took her hand within my own,
I drew her gently nearer,
And whispered almost on her cheek,
"Oh, would that I were dearer."
Dearer! No, that's not my prayer:
A stranger, e'en the merest,
Might chance to have some value there;
But I would be the dearest.'

'What had he done to merit such a hope?' said she haughtily.

'Loved her—only loved her!'

'What value you men must attach to this gift of your affection, when it can nourish such thoughts as these! Your very wilfulness is to win us—is not that your theory? I expect from the man who offers me his heart that he means to share with me his own power and his own ambition—to make me the partner of a station that is to give me some pre-eminence I had not known before, nor could gain unaided.'

'And you would call that marrying for love?'

'Why not? Who has such a claim upon my life as he who makes the life worth living for? Did you hear that shout?

'I heard it,' said he, standing still to listen.

'It came from the village. What can it mean?'

'It's the old war-cry of the houseless,' said he mournfully. 'It's a note we are well used to here. I must go down to learn. I'll be back presently.'

'You are not going into danger?' said she; and her cheek grew paler as she spoke.

'And if I were, who is to care for it?'

'Have you no mother, sister, sweetheart?'

'No, not one of the three. Good-bye.'

'But if I were to say—stay?'

'I should still go. To have your love, I'd sacrifice even my honour. Without it——' he threw up his arms despairingly and rushed away.

'These are the men whose tempers compromise us,' said she thoughtfully. 'We come to accept their violence as a reason, and take mere impetuosity for an argument. I am glad that he did not shake my resolution. There, that was another shout, but it seemed in joy. There was a ring of gladness in it. Now for my sketch.' And she reseated herself before her easel. 'He shall see when he comes back how diligently I have worked, and how small a share anxiety has had in my thoughts. The one thing men are not proof against is our independence of them.' And thus talking in broken sentences to herself, she went on rapidly with her drawing, occasionally stopping to gaze on it, and humming some old Italian ballad to herself. 'His Greek air was pretty. Not that it was Greek; these fragments of melody were left behind them by the Venetians, who, in all lust of power, made songs about contented poverty and humble joys. I feel intensely hungry, and if my dangerous guest does not return soon, I shall have to breakfast alone—another way of showing him how little his fate has interested me. My foreground here does

want that bit of colour. Why does he not come back?' As she rose to look at her drawing, the sound of somebody running attracted her attention, and turning, she saw it was her foot-page Larry coming at full speed.

'What is it, Larry? What has happened?' asked she.

'You are to go—as fast as you can,' said he; which being for him a longer speech than usual, seemed to have exhausted him.

'Go where? and why?'

'Yes,' said he, with a stolid look, 'you are.'

'I am to do what? Speak out, boy! Who sent you here?'

'Yes,' said he again.

'Are they in trouble yonder? Is there fighting at the village?'

'No.' And he shook his head, as though he said so regretfully.

'Will you tell me what you mean, boy?'

'The pony is ready?' said he, as he stooped down to pack away the things in the basket.

'Is that gentleman coming back here—that gentleman whom you saw with me?'

'He is gone; he got away.' And here he laughed in a malicious way, that was more puzzling even than his words.

'And am I to go back home at once?'

'Yes,' replied he resolutely.

'Do you know why—for what reason?'

'I do.'

'Come, like a good boy, tell me, and you shall have this.' And she drew a piece of silver from her purse, and held it temptingly before him. 'Why should I go back, now?'

'Because,' muttered he, 'because——' and it was plain, from the glance in his eyes, that the bribe had engaged all his faculties.

'So, then, you will not tell me?' said she, replacing the money in her purse.

'Yes,' said he, in a despondent tone.

'You can have it still, Larry, if you will but say who sent you here.'

'*He* sent me,' was the answer.

'Who was he? Do you mean the gentleman who came here with me?' A nod assented to this. 'And what did he tell you to say to me?'

'Yes,' said he, with a puzzled look, as though once more the confusion of his thoughts was mastering him.

'So, then, it is that you will not tell me?' said she angrily. He made no answer, but went on packing the plates in the basket. 'Leave those there, and go and fetch me some water from the spring yonder.' And she gave him a jug as she spoke, and now

she reseated herself on the grass. He obeyed at once, and returned speedily with water.

'Come now, Larry,' said she kindly to him. 'I'm sure you mean to be a good boy. You shall breakfast with me. Get me a cup, and I'll give you some milk; here is bread and cold meat.'

'Yes,' muttered Larry, whose mouth was already too much engaged for speech.

'You will tell me by and by what they were doing at the village, and what that shouting meant—won't you?'

'Yes,' said he, with a nod. Then suddenly bending his head to listen, he motioned with his hand to keep silence, and after a long breath said, 'They're coming.'

'Who are coming?' asked she eagerly; but at the same instant a man emerged from the copse below the hill, followed by several others, whom she saw by their dress and equipment to belong to the constabulary.

Approaching with his hat in his hand, and with that air of servile civility which marked him, old Gill addressed her. 'If it's not displazin' to ye, miss, we want to ax you a few questions,' said he.

'You have no right, sir, to make any such request,' said she, with a haughty air.

'There was a man with you, my lady,' he went on, 'as you drove through Cruhan, and we want to know where he is now.'

'That concerns you, sir, and not me.'

'Maybe it does, my lady,' said he, with a grin; 'but I suppose you know who you were travelling with?'

'You evidently don't remember, sir, whom you are talking to.'

'The law is the law, miss, and there's none of us above it,' said he, half defiantly; 'and when there's some hundred pounds on a man's head, there's few of us such fools as to let him slip through our fingers.'

'I don't understand you, sir, nor do I care to do so.'

'The sergeant there has a warrant against him,' said he, in a whisper he intended to be confidential; 'and it's not to do anything that your ladyship would think rude that I came up myself. There's how it is now,' muttered he, still lower. 'They want to search the luggage, and examine the baskets there, and maybe, if you don't object, they'd look through the carriage.'

'And if I should object to this insult?' broke she in.

'Faix, I believe,' said he, laughing, 'they'd do it all the same. Eight hundred—I think it's eight—isn't to be made any day of the year!'

'My uncle is a justice of the peace, Mr. Gill; and you know if he will suffer such an outrage to go unpunished.'

'There 's the more reason that a justice shouldn't harbour a Fenian, miss,' said he boldly; 'as he 'll know when he sees the search-warrant.'

'Get ready the carriage, Larry,' said she, turning contemptuously away, 'and follow me towards the village.'

'The sergeant, miss, would like to say a word or two,' said Gill, in his accustomed voice of servility.

'I will not speak with him,' said she proudly, and swept past him.

The constables stood to one side, and saluted in military fashion as she passed down the hill. There was that in her queenlike gesture and carriage that so impressed them, the men stood as though on parade.

Slowly and thoughtfully as she sauntered along, her thoughts turned to Donogan. Had he escaped? was the idea that never left her. The presence of these men here seemed to favour that impression; but there might be others on his track, and if so, how in that wild bleak space was he to conceal himself? A single man moving miles away on the bog could be seen. There was no covert, no shelter anywhere! What an interest did his fate now suggest, and yet a moment back she believed herself indifferent to him. 'Was he aware of his danger,' thought she, 'when he lay there talking carelessly to me; was that recklessness the bravery of a bold man who despised peril?' And if so, what stuff these souls were made of! These were not of the Kearney stamp, that needed to be stimulated and goaded to any effort in life; nor like Atlee, the fellow who relied on trick and knavery for success; still less such as Walpole, self-worshippers and triflers. 'Yes,' said she aloud, 'a woman might feel that with such a man at her side the battle of life need not affright her. He might venture too far—he might aspire to much that was beyond his reach, and strive for the impossible; but that grand bold spirit would sustain him, and carry him through all the smaller storms of life: and such a man might be a hero, even to her who saw him daily. These are the dreamers, as we call them,' said she. 'How strange it would be if *they* should prove the realists, and that it was *we* should be the mere shadows! If these be the men who move empires and make history, how doubly ignoble are we in our contempt of them. And then she bethought her what a different faculty was that great faith that these men had in themselves from common vanity; and in this way she was led again to compare Donogan and Walpole.

She reached the village before her little carriage had overtaken her, and saw that the people stood about in groups and knots. A depressing silence prevailed over them, and they rarely spoke above a whisper. The same respectful greeting, however, which welcomed her before, met her again; and as they lifted their hats, she saw, or thought she saw, that they looked on her with a more tender interest. Several policemen moved about through the crowd, who, though they saluted her respectfully, could not refrain from scrutinising her appearance and watching her as she went. With that air of haughty self-possession which well became her—for it was no affectation—she swept proudly along, resolutely determined not to utter a word, or even risk a question as to the way.

Twice she turned to see if her pony were coming, and then resumed her road. From the excited air and rapid gestures of the police, as they hurried from place to place, she could guess that up to this Donogan had not been captured. Still, it seemed hopeless that concealment in such a place could be accomplished.

As she gained the little stream that divided the village, she stood for a moment uncertain, when a countrywoman, as it were divining her difficulty, said, 'If you'll cross over the bridge, my lady, the path will bring you out on the highroad.'

As Nina turned to thank her, the woman looked up from her task of washing in the river, and made a gesture with her hand towards the bog. Slight as the action was, it appealed to that Southern intelligence that reads a sign even faster than a word. Nina saw that the woman meant to say Donogan had escaped, and once more she said, 'Thank you—from my heart I thank you!'

Just as she emerged upon the highroad, her pony and carriage came up. A sergeant of police was, however, in waiting beside it, who, saluting her respectfully, said, 'There was no disrespect meant to you, miss, by our search of the carriage—our duty obliged us to do it. We have a warrant to apprehend the man that was seen with you this morning, and it's only that we know who you are, and where you come from, prevents us from asking you to come before our chief.'

He presented his arm to assist her to her place as he spoke; but she declined the help, and, without even noticing him in any way, arranged her rugs and wraps around her, took the reins, and motioning Larry to his place, drove on.

'Is my drawing safe?—have all my brushes and pencils been put in?' asked she, after a while. But already Larry had taken his leave, and she could see him as he flitted across the bog to catch her by some short cut.

That strange contradiction by which a woman can journey alone and in safety through the midst of a country only short of open insurrection, filled her mind as she went, and thinking of it in every shape and fashion occupied her for miles of the way. The desolation, far as the eye could reach, was complete—there was not a habitation, not a human thing to be seen. The dark-brown desert faded away in the distance into low-lying clouds, the only break to the dull uniformity being some stray 'clamp,' as it is called, of turf, left by the owners from some accident of season or bad weather, and which loomed out now against the sky like a vast fortress.

This long, long day—for so without any weariness she felt it—was now in the afternoon, and already long shadows of these turf-mounds stretched their giant limbs across the waste. Nina, who had eaten nothing since early morning, felt faint and hungry. She halted her pony, and taking out some bread and a bottle of milk, proceeded to make a frugal luncheon. The complete loneliness, the perfect silence, in which even the rattling of the harness as the pony shook himself made itself felt, gave something of solemnity to the moment, as the young girl sat there and gazed half terrified around her.

As she looked, she thought she saw something pass from one turf-clamp to the other, and, watching closely, she could distinctly detect a figure crouching near the ground, and, after some minutes, emerging into the open space, again to be hidden by some vast turf-mound. There, now—there could not be a doubt—it was a man, and he was waving his handkerchief as a signal. It was Donogan himself—she could recognise him well. Clearing the long drains at a bound, and with a speed that vouched for perfect training, he came rapidly forward, and, leaping the wide trench, alighted at last on the road beside her.

'I have watched you for an hour, and but for this lucky halt, I should not have overtaken you after all,' cried he, as he wiped his brow and stood panting beside her.

'Do you know that they are in pursuit of you?' cried she hastily.

'I know it all. I learned it before I reached the village, and in time—only in time—to make a circuit and reach the bog. Once there, I defy the best of them.'

'They have what they call a warrant to search for you.'

'I know that too,' cried he. 'No, no!' said he passionately, as she offered him a drink, 'let me have it from the cup you have drank from. It may be the last favour I shall ever ask you—don't refuse me this!'

She touched the glass slightly with her lips, and handed it to him with a smile.

'What peril would I not brave for this!' cried he, with a wild ecstasy.

'Can you not venture to return with me?' said she, in some confusion, for the bold gleam of his gaze now half abashed her.

'No. That would be to compromise others as well as myself. I must gain Dublin how I can. There I shall be safe against all pursuit. I have come back for nothing but disappointment,' added he sorrowfully. 'This country is not ready to rise—they are too many-minded for a common effort. The men like Wolfe Tone are not to be found amongst us now, and to win freedom you must dare the felony.'

'Is it not dangerous to delay so long here?' asked she, looking around her with anxiety.

'So it is—and I will go. Will you keep this for me?' said he, placing a thick and much-worn pocket-book in her hands. 'There are papers there would risk far better heads than mine; and if I should be taken, these must not be discovered. It may be, Nina—oh, forgive me if I say your name! but it is such joy to me to utter it once—it may be that you should chance to hear some word whose warning might save me. If so, and if you would deign to write to me, you'll find three if not four, addresses, under any of which you could safely write to me.'

'I shall not forget. Good fortune be with you. Adieu!'

She held out her hand; but he bent over it, and kissed it rapturously; and when he raised his head, his eyes were streaming, and his cheeks deadly pale. 'Adieu!' said she again.

He tried to speak, but no sound came from his lips; and when, after she had driven some distance away, she turned to look after him, he was standing on the same spot in the road, his hat at his foot, where it had fallen when he stooped to kiss her hand.

CHAPTER XXXVII

THE RETURN

Kate Kearney was in the act of sending out scouts and messengers to look out for Nina, whose long absence had begun to alarm her, when she heard that she had returned and was in her room.

'What a fright you have given me, darling!' said Kate, as

she threw her arms about her, and kissed her affectionately. 'Do you know how late you are?'

'No; I only know how tired I am.'

'What a long day of fatigue you must have gone through. Tell me of it all.'

'Tell me rather of yours. You have had the great Mr. Walpole here: is it not so?'

'Yes; he is still here—he has graciously given us another day, and will not leave till to-morrow night.'

'By what good fortune have you been so favoured as this?'

'Ostensibly to finish a long conversation or conference with papa, but really and truthfully, I suspect, to meet Mademoiselle Kostalergi, whose absence has piqued him.'

'Yes, piqued is the word. It is the extreme of the pain he is capable of feeling. What has he said of it?'

'Nothing beyond the polite regrets that courtesy could express, and then adverted to something else.'

'With an abruptness that betrayed preparation?'

'Perhaps so.'

'Not perhaps, but certainly so. Vanity such as his has no variety. It repeats its moods over and over; but why do we talk of him? I have other things to tell you of. You know that man who came here with Dick. That Mr. ——'

'I know—I know,' cried the other hurriedly, 'what of him?'

'He joined me this morning, on my way through the bog, and drove with me to Cruhan.'

'Indeed!' muttered Kate thoughtfully.

'A strange, wayward, impulsive sort of creature—unlike any one—interesting from his strong convictions——'

'Did he convert you to any of his opinions, Nina?'

'You mean, make a rebel of me. No; for the simple reason that I had none to surrender. I do not know what is wrong here, nor what people would say was right.'

'You are aware, then, who he is?'

'Of course I am. I was on the terrace that night when your brother told you he was Donogan—the famous Fenian Donogan. The secret was not intended for me, but I kept it all the same, and I took an interest in the man from the time I heard it.'

'You told him, then, that you knew who he was.'

'To be sure I did, and we are fast friends already; but let me go on with my narrative. Some excitement, some show of disturbance at Cruhan, persuaded him that what he called—I don't know why—the Crowbar Brigade was at work, and that the people were about to be turned adrift on the world by the

landlord, and hearing a wild shout from the village, he insisted on going back to learn what it might mean. He had not left me long, when your late steward, Gill, came up with several policemen, to search for the convict Donogan. They had a warrant to apprehend him, and some information as to where he had been housed and sheltered.'

'Here—with us?'

'Here—with you! Gill knew it all. This, then, was the reason for that excitement we had seen in the village—the people had heard the police were coming, but for what they knew not; of course the only thought was for their own trouble.'

'Has he escaped? Is he safe?'

'Safe so far, that I last saw him on the wide bog, some eight miles away from any human habitation; but where he is to turn to, or who is to shelter him, I cannot say.'

'He told you there was a price upon his head?'

'Yes, a few hundred pounds, I forget how much, but he asked me this morning if I did not feel tempted to give him up and earn the reward.'

Kate leaned her head upon her hand, and seemed lost in thought.

'They will scarcely dare to come and search for him here,' said she; and, after a pause, added, 'And yet I suspect that the chief constable, Mr. Curtis, owes, or thinks he owes, us a grudge: he might not be sorry to pass this slight upon papa.' And she pondered for some time over the thought.

'Do you think he can escape?' asked Nina eagerly.

'Who, Donogan?'

'Of course—Donogan.'

'Yes, I suspect he will: these men have popular feeling with them, even amongst many who do not share their opinions. Have you lived long enough amongst us, Nina, to know that we all hate the law? In some shape or other it represents to the Irish mind a tyranny.'

'You are Greeks without their acuteness,' said Nina.

'I'll not say that,' said Kate hastily. 'It is true I know nothing of your people, but I think I could aver that for a shrewd calculation of the cost of a venture, for knowing when caution and when daring will best succeed, the Irish peasant has scarcely a superior anywhere.'

'I have heard much of his caution this very morning,' said Nina superciliously.

'You might have heard far more of his recklessness, if Donogan cared to tell of it,' said Kate, with irritation. 'It is not English

squadrons and batteries he is called alone to face, he has to meet English gold, that tempts poverty, and English corruption, that begets treachery and betrayal. The one stronghold of the Saxon here is the informer, and mind, I, who tell you this, am no rebel. I would rather live under English law, if English law would not ignore Irish feeling, than I'd accept that Heaven knows what of a government Fenianism could give us.'

'I care nothing for all this, I don't well know if I can follow it; but I do know that I'd like this man to escape. He gave me this pocket-book, and told me to keep it safely. It contains some secrets that would compromise people that none suspect, and it has, besides, some three or four addresses to which I could write with safety if I saw cause to warn him of any coming danger.'

'And you mean to do this?'

'Of course I do; I feel an interest in this man. I like him. I like his adventurous spirit. I like that ambitious daring to do or to be something beyond the herd around him. I like that readiness he shows to stake his life on an issue. His enthusiasm inflames his whole nature. He vulgarises such fine gentlemen as Mr. Walpole, and such poor pretenders as Joe Atlee, and, indeed, your brother, Kate.'

'I will suffer no detraction of Dick Kearney,' said Kate resolutely.

'Give me a cup of tea, then, and I shall be more mannerly, for I am quite exhausted, and I am afraid my temper is not proof against starvation.'

'But you will come down to the drawing-room, they are all so eager to see you,' said Kate caressingly.

'No; I'll have my tea and go to bed, and I'll dream that Mr. Donogan has been made King of Ireland, and made an offer to share the throne with me.'

'Your Majesty's tea shall be served at once,' said Kate, as she curtsied deeply and withdrew.

CHAPTER XXXVIII

O'SHEA'S BARN

THERE were many more pretentious houses than O'Shea's Barn. It would have been easy enough to discover larger rooms and finer furniture, more numerous servants and more of display in all the details of life; but for an air of quiet comfort, for the

certainty of meeting with every material enjoyment that people of moderate fortune aspire to, it stood unrivalled.

The rooms were airy and cheerful, with flowers in summer, as they were well heated and well lighted in winter. The most massive-looking but luxurious old arm-chairs, that modern taste would have repudiated for ugliness, abounded everywhere; and the four cumbrous but comfortable seats that stood around the circular dinner-table—and it was a matter of principle with Miss Betty that the company should never be more numerous—only needed speech to have told of traditions of conviviality for very nigh two centuries back.

As for a dinner at the Barn, the whole countyside confessed that they never knew how it was that Miss Betty's salmon was 'curdier' and her mountain mutton more tender, and her woodcocks racier and of higher flavour, than any one else's. Her brown sherry you might have equalled—she liked the colour and the heavy taste—but I defy you to match that marvellous port which came in with the cheese, and as little, in these days of light Bordeaux, that stout-hearted Sneyd's claret, in its ancient decanter, whose delicately fine neck seemed fashioned to retain the bouquet.

The most exquisite compliment that a courtier ever uttered could not have given Miss Betty the same pleasure as to hear one of her guests request a second slice off 'the haunch.' This was, indeed, a flattery that appealed to her finest sensibilities, and as she herself carved, she knew how to reward that appreciative man with fat.

Never was the virtue of hospitality more self-rewarding than in her case; and the discriminating individual who ate with gusto, and who never associated the wrong condiment with his food, found favour in her eyes, and was sure of re-invitation.

Fortune had rewarded her with one man of correct taste and exquisite palate as a diner-out. This was the parish priest, the Rev. Luke Delany, who had been educated abroad, and whose natural gifts had been improved by French and Italian experiences. He was a small little meek man, with closely-cut black hair and eyes of the darkest, scrupulously neat in dress, and, by his ruffles and buckled shoes at dinner, affecting something of the abbé in his appearance. To such as associated the Catholic priest with coarse manners, vulgar expressions, or violent sentiments, Father Luke, with his low voice, his well-chosen words, and his universal moderation, was a standing rebuke; and many an English tourist who met him came away with the impression of the gross calumny that associated this man's order with under-

bred habits and disloyal ambitions. He spoke little, but he was an admirable listener, and there was a sweet encouragement in the bland nod of his head, and a racy appreciation in the bright twinkle of his humorous eye, that the prosiest talker found irresistible.

There were times, indeed—stirring intervals of political excitement—when Miss Betty would have liked more hardihood and daring in her ghostly counsellor; but Heaven help the man who would have ventured on the open avowal of such opinion or uttered a word in disparagement of Father Luke.

It was in that snug dinner-room I have glanced at that a party of four sat over their wine. They had dined admirably, a bright wood fire blazed on the hearth, and the scene was the emblem of comfort and quiet conviviality. Opposite Miss O'Shea sat Father Delany, and on either side of her her nephew Gorman and Mr. Ralph Miller, in whose honour the present dinner was given.

The Catholic bishop of the diocese had vouchsafed a guarded and cautious approval of Mr. Miller's views, and secretly instructed Father Delany to learn as much more as he conveniently could of the learned gentleman's intentions before committing himself to a pledge of hearty support.

'I will give him a good dinner,' said Miss O'Shea, 'and some of the '45 claret, and if you cannot get his sentiments out of him after that, I wash my hands of him.'

Father Delany accepted his share of the task, and assuredly Miss Betty did not fail on her part.

The conversation had turned principally on the coming election, and Mr. Miller gave a flourishing account of his success as a canvasser, and even went the length of doubting if any opposition would be offered to him.

'Ain't you and young Kearney going on the same ticket?' asked Gorman, who was too new to Ireland to understand the nice distinctions of party.

'Pardon me,' said Miller, 'we differ essentially. *We* want a government in Ireland—the Nationalists want none. *We* desire order by means of timely concessions and judicious boons to the people. They want disorder—the display of gross injustice—content to wait for a scramble, and see what can come of it.'

'Mr. Miller's friends, besides,' interposed Father Luke, 'would defend the Church and protect the Holy See'—and this was said with a half-interrogation.

Miller coughed twice, and said, 'Unquestionably. We have shown our hand already—look what we have done with the Established Church.'

'You need not be proud of it,' cried Miss Betty. 'If you wanted to get rid of the crows, why didn't you pull down the rookery?'

'At least they don't caw so loud as they used,' said the priest, smiling; and Miller exchanged delighted glances with him for his opinion.

'I want to be rid of them, root and branch,' said Miss Betty.

'If you will vouchsafe us, ma'am, a little patience. Rome was not built in a day. The next victory of our Church must be won by the downfall of the English establishment. Ain't I right, Father Luke?'

'I am not quite clear about that,' said the priest cautiously. 'Equality is not the safe road to supremacy.'

'What was that row over towards Croghan Castle this morning?' asked Gorman, who was getting wearied with a discussion he could not follow. 'I saw the constabulary going in force there this afternoon.'

'They were in pursuit of the celebrated Dan Donogan,' said Father Luke. 'They say he was seen at Moate.'

'They say more than that,' said Miss Betty. 'They say that he is stopping at Kilgobbin Castle!'

'I suppose to conduct young Kearney's election,' said Miller, laughing.

'And why should they hunt him down?' asked Gorman. 'What has he done?'

'He's a Fenian—a head-centre—a man who wants to revolutionise Ireland,' replied Miller.

'And destroy the Church,' chimed in the priest.

'Humph!' muttered Gorman, who seemed to imply, Is this all you can lay to his charge? 'Has he escaped?' asked he suddenly.

'Up to this he has,' said Miller. 'I was talking to the constabulary chief this afternoon, and he told me that the fellow is sure to be apprehended. He has taken to the open bog, and there are eighteen in full cry after him. There is a search-warrant, too, arrived, and they mean to look him up at Kilgobbin Castle.'

'To search Kilgobbin Castle, do you mean?' asked Gorman.

'Just so. It will be, as I perceive you think it, a great offence to Mr. Kearney, and it is not impossible that his temper may provoke him to resist it.'

'The mere rumour may materially assist his son's election,' said the priest slyly.

'Only with the party who have no votes, Father Luke,'

rejoined Miller. 'That precarious popularity of the mob is about the most dangerous enemy a man can have in Ireland.'

'You are right, sir,' said the priest blandly. 'The real favour of this people is only bestowed on him who has gained the confidence of the clergy.'

'If that be true,' cried Gorman, 'upon my oath I think you are worse off here than in Austria. There, at least, we are beginning to think without the permission of the Church.'

'Let us have none of your atheism here, young man,' broke in his aunt angrily. 'Such sentiments have never been heard in this room before.'

'If I apprehend Lieutenant Gorman aright,' interposed Father Luke, 'he only refers to the late movement of the Austrian Empire with reference to the Concordat, on which, amongst religious men, there are two opinions.'

'No, no, you mistake me altogether,' rejoined Gorman. 'What I mean was, that a man can read, and talk, and think in Austria without the leave of the priest; that he can marry, and if he like, he can die without his assistance.'

'Gorman, you are a beast,' said the old lady, 'and if you lived here, you would be a Fenian.'

'You're wrong too, aunt,' replied he. 'I'd crush those fellows to-morrow if I was in power here.'

'Mayhap the game is not so easy as you deem it,' interposed Miller.

'Certainly it is not so easy when played as you do it here. You deal with your law-breakers only by the rule of legality: that is to say, you respect all the regulations of the game towards the men who play false. You have your cumbrous details, and your lawyers, and judges, and juries, and you cannot even proclaim a county in a state of siege without a bill in your blessed Parliament, and a basketful of balderdash about the liberty of the subject. Is it any wonder rebellion is a regular trade with you, and that men who don't like work, or business habits, take to it as a livelihood?'

'But have you never heard Curran's saying, young gentleman? "You cannot bring an indictment against a nation,"' said Miller.

'I'd trouble myself little with indictments,' replied Gorman. 'I'd break down the confederacy by spies; I'd seize the fellows I knew to be guilty, and hang them.'

'Without evidence, without trial?'

'Very little of a trial, when I had once satisfied myself of the guilt.'

'Are you so certain that no innocent men might be brought to the scaffold?' asked the priest mildly.

'No, I am not. I take it, as the world goes, very few of us go through life without some injustice or another. I'd do my best not to hang the fellows who didn't deserve it, but I own I'd be much more concerned about the millions who wanted to live peaceably than the few hundred rapscallions that were bent on troubling them.'

'I must say, sir,' said the priest, 'I am much more gratified to know that you are a Lieutenant of Lancers in Austria than a British Minister in Downing Street.'

'I have little doubt myself,' said the other, laughing, 'that I am more in my place; but of this I am sure, that if we were as mealy-mouthed with our Croats and Slovacks as you are with your Fenians, Austria would soon go to pieces.'

'There is, however, a higher price on that man Donogan's head than Austria ever offered for a traitor,' said Miller.

'I know how you esteem money here,' said Gorman, laughing. 'When all else fails you, you fall back upon it.'

'Why did I know nothing of these sentiments, young man, before I asked you under my roof?' said Miss Betty, in anger.

'You need never to have known them now, aunt, if these gentlemen had not provoked them, nor indeed are they solely mine. I am only telling you what you would hear from any intelligent foreigner, even though he chanced to be a liberal in his own country.'

'Ah, yes,' sighed the priest: 'what the young gentleman says is too true. The Continent is alarmingly infected with such opinions as these.'

'Have you talked on politics with young Kearney?' asked Miller.

'He has had no opportunity,' interposed Miss O'Shea. 'My nephew will be three weeks here on Thursday next, and neither Mathew nor his son have called on him.'

'Scarcely neighbourlike that, I must say,' cried Miller.

'I suspect the fault lies on my side,' said Gorman boldly. 'When I was little more than a boy, I was never out of that house. The old man treated me like a son. All the more, perhaps, as his own son was seldom at home, and the little girl Kitty certainly regarded me as a brother; and though we had our fights and squabbles, we cried very bitterly at parting, and each of us vowed we should never like any one so much again. And now, after all, here am I three weeks, within two hours' ride of them, and my aunt insists that my dignity requires I

should be first called on. Confound such dignity! say I, if it lose me the best and the pleasantest friends I ever had in my life.'

'I scarcely thought of *your* dignity, Gorman O'Shea,' said the old lady, bridling, 'though I did bestow some consideration on my own.'

'I 'm very sorry for it, aunt, and I tell you fairly—and there 's no unpoliteness in the confession—that when I asked for my leave, Kilgobbin Castle had its place in my thoughts as well as O'Shea's Barn.'

'Why not say it out, young gentleman, and tell me that the real charm of coming here was to be within twelve miles of the Kearneys.'

'The merits of this house are very independent of contiguity,' said the priest; and as he eyed the claret in his glass, it was plain that the sentiment was an honest one.

'Fifty-six wine, I should say,' said Miller, as he laid down his glass.

'Forty-five, if Mr. Barton be a man of his word,' said the old lady reprovingly.

'Ah,' sighed the priest plaintively, 'how rarely one meets these old full-bodied clarets nowadays. The free admission of French wines has corrupted taste and impaired palate. Our cheap Gladstones have come upon us like universal suffrage.'

'The masses, however, benefit,' remarked Miller.

'Only in the first moment of acquisition, and in the novelty of the gain,' continued Father Luke; 'and then they suffer irreparably in the loss of that old guidance, which once directed appreciation when there was something to appreciate.'

'We want the priest again, in fact,' broke in Gorman.

'You must admit they understand wine to perfection, though I would humbly hope, young gentleman,' said the Father modestly, 'to engage your good opinion of them on higher grounds.'

'Give yourself no trouble in the matter, Father Luke,' broke in Miss Betty. 'Gorman's Austrian lessons have placed him beyond *your* teaching.'

'My dear aunt, you are giving the Imperial Government a credit it never deserved. They taught me as a cadet to groom my horse and pipeclay my uniform, to be respectful to my corporal, and to keep my thumb on the seam of my trousers when the captain's eye was on me; but as to what passed inside my mind, if I had a mind at all, or what I thought of Pope, Kaiser, or Cardinal, they no more cared to know it than the name of my sweetheart.'

'What a blessing to that benighted country would be one liberal statesman!' exclaimed Miller: 'one man of the mind and capacity of our present Premier!'

'Heaven forbid!' cried Gorman. 'We have confusion enough, without the reflection of being governed by what you call here "healing measures."'

'I should like to discuss that point with you,' said Miller.

'Not now, I beg,' interposed Miss O'Shea. 'Gorman, will you decant another bottle?'

'I believe I ought to protest against more wine,' said the priest, in his most insinuating voice; 'but there are occasions where the yielding to temptation conveys a moral lesson.'

'I suspect that I cultivate my nature a good deal in that fashion,' said Gorman, as he opened a fresh bottle.

'This is perfectly delicious,' said Miller, as he sipped his glass; 'and if I could venture to presume so far, I would ask leave to propose a toast.'

'You have my permission, sir,' said Miss Betty, with stateliness.

'I drink, then,' said he reverently, 'I drink to the long life, the good health, and the unbroken courage of the Holy Father.'

There was something peculiarly sly in the twinkle of the priest's black eye as he filled his bumper, and a twitching motion of the corner of his mouth continued even as he said, 'To the Pope.'

'The Pope,' said Gorman as he eyed his wine—

'"Der Papst lebt herrlich in der Welt."'

'What are you muttering there?' asked his aunt fiercely.

'The line of an old song, aunt, that tells us how his Holiness has a jolly time of it.'

'I fear me it must have been written in other days,' said Father Luke.

'There is no intention to desert or abandon him, I assure you,' said Miller, addressing him in a low but eager tone. 'I could never—no Irishman could—ally himself to an administration which should sacrifice the Holy See. With the bigotry that prevails in England, the question requires most delicate handling; and even a pledge cannot be given except in language so vague and unprecise as to admit of many readings.'

'Why not bring in a Bill to give him a subsidy, a something per annum, or a round sum down?' cried Gorman.

'Mr. Miller has just shown us that Exeter Hall might become dangerous. English intolerance is not a thing to be rashly aroused.'

'If I had to deal with him, I'd do as Bright proposed with

your landlords here. I'd buy him out, give him a handsome sum for his interest, and let him go.'

'And how would you deal with the Church, sir?' asked the priest.

'I have not thought of that; but I suppose one might put it into commission, as they say, or manage it by a Board, with a First Lord, like the Admiralty.'

'I will give you some tea, gentlemen, when you appear in the drawing-room,' said Miss Betty, rising with dignity, as though her condescension in sitting so long with the party had been ill rewarded by her nephew's sentiments.

The priest, however, offered his arm, and the others followed as he left the room.

CHAPTER XXXIX

AN EARLY GALLOP

Mathew Kearney had risen early, an unusual thing with him of late; but he had some intention of showing his guest Mr. Walpole over the farm after breakfast, and was anxious to give some preliminary orders to have everything 'ship-shape' for the inspection.

To make a very disorderly and much-neglected Irish farm assume an air of discipline, regularity, and neatness at a moment's notice, was pretty much such an exploit as it would have been to muster an Indian tribe, and pass them before some Prussian martinet as a regiment of guards.

To make the ill-fenced and misshapen fields seem trim paddocks, wavering and serpentining furrows appear straight and regular lines of tillage, weed-grown fields look marvels of cleanliness and care, while the lounging and ragged population were to be passed off as a thriving and industrious peasantry, well paid and contented, were difficulties that Mr. Kearney did not propose to confront. Indeed, to do him justice, he thought there was a good deal of pedantic and 'model-farming' humbug about all that English passion for neatness he had read of in public journals, and as our fathers—better gentlemen, as he called them, and more hospitable fellows than any of us—had got on without steam-mowing and threshing, and bone-crushing, he thought we might farm our properties without being either blacksmiths or stokers.

'God help us,' he would say, 'I suppose we'll be chewing our food by steam one of these days, and filling our stomachs by

hydraulic pressure. But for my own part, I like something to work for me that I can swear at when it goes wrong. There's little use in cursing a cylinder.'

To have heard him amongst his labourers that morning, it was plain to see that they were not in the category of machinery. On one pretext or another, however, they had slunk away one by one, so that at last he found himself storming alone in a stubble-field, with no other companion than one of Kate's terriers. The sharp barking of this dog aroused him in the midst of his imprecations, and looking over the dry-stone wall that inclosed the field, he saw a horseman coming along at a sharp canter, and taking the fences as they came like a man in a hunting-field. He rode well, and was mounted upon a strong wiry hackney—a cross-bred horse, and of little money value, but one of those active cats of horseflesh that a knowing hand can appreciate. Now, little as Kearney liked the liberty of a man riding over his ditches and his turnips when out of hunting season, his old love of good horsemanship made him watch the rider with interest and even pleasure. 'May I never!' muttered he to himself, 'if he's not coming at this wall.' And as the inclosure in question was built of large jagged stones, without mortar, and fully four feet in height, the upper course being formed of a sort of coping in which the stones stood edgewise, the attempt did look somewhat rash. Not taking the wall where it was slightly breached, and where some loose stones had fallen, the rider rode boldly at one of the highest portions, but where the ground was good on either side.

'He knows what he's at!' muttered Kearney, as the horse came bounding over and alighted in perfect safety in the field.

'Well done! whoever you are,' cried Kearney, delighted, as the rider removed his hat and turned round to salute him.

'And don't you know me, sir?' asked he.

''Faith, I do not,' replied Kearney; 'but somehow I think I know the chestnut. To be sure I do. There's the old mark on her knee, how ever she found the man who could throw her down. Isn't she Miss O'Shea's Kattoo?'

'That she is, sir, and I'm her nephew.'

'Are you?' said Kearney dryly.

The young fellow was so terribly pulled up by the unexpected repulse—more marked even by the look than the words of the other—that he sat unable to utter a syllable. 'I had hoped, sir,' said he at last, 'that I had not outgrown your recollection, as I can promise none of your former kindness to me has outgrown mine.'

'But it took you three weeks to recall it, all the same,' said Kearney

'It is true, sir, I am very nearly so long here; but my aunt, whose guest I am, told me I must be called on first; that—I 'm sure I can't say for whose benefit it was supposed to be—I should not make the first visit; in fact, there was some rule about the matter, and that I must not contravene it. And although I yielded with a very bad grace, I was in a measure under orders, and dared not resist.'

'She told you, of course, that we were not on our old terms: that there was a coldness between the families, and we had seen nothing of each other lately?'

'Not a word of it, sir.'

'Nor of any reason why you should not come here as of old?'

'None, on my honour; beyond this piece of stupid etiquette, I never heard of anything like a reason.'

'I am all the better pleased with my old neighbour,' said Kearney, in his more genial tone. 'Not, indeed, that I ought ever to have distrusted her, but for all that—— Well, never mind,' muttered he, as though debating the question with himself, and unable to decide it, 'you are here now—eh! You are here now.'

'You almost make me suspect, sir, that I ought not to be here now.'

'At all events, if you were waiting for me you wouldn't be here. Is not that true, young gentleman?'

'Quite true, sir, but not impossible to explain.' And he now flung himself to the ground, and with the rein over his arm, came up to Kearney's side. 'I suppose, but for an accident, I should have gone on waiting for that visit you had no intention to make me, and canvassing with myself how long you were taking to make up your mind to call on me, when I heard only last night that some noted rebel—I 'll remember his name in a minute or two—was seen in the neighbourhood, and that the police were on his track with a warrant, and even intended to search for him here.'

'In my house—in Kilgobbin Castle?'

'Yes, here in your house, where, from a sure information, he had been harboured for some days. This fellow—a head-centre, or leader, with a large sum on his head—has, they say, got away; but the hope of finding some papers, some clue to him here, will certainly lead them to search the castle, and I thought I 'd come over and apprise you of it at all events, lest the surprise should prove too much for your temper.'

'Do they forget I 'm in the commission of the peace?' said Kearney in a voice trembling with passion.

'You know far better than me how far party spirit tempers life in this country, and are better able to say whether some private intention to insult is couched under this attempt.'

'That's true,' cried the old man, ever ready to regard himself as the object of some secret malevolence. 'You cannot remember this rebel's name, can you?'

'It was Daniel something—that's all I know.'

A long, fine whistle was Kearney's rejoinder, and after a second or two he said, 'I can trust you, Gorman; and I may tell you they may be not so great fools as I took them for. Not that I was harbouring the fellow, mind you; but there came a college friend of Dick's here a few days back—a clever fellow he was, and knew Ireland well—and we called him Mr. Daniel, and it was but yesterday he left us and did not return. I have a notion now he was the head-centre they're looking for.'

'Do you know if he has left any baggage or papers behind him?'

'I know nothing about this whatever, nor do I know how far Dick was in his secret.'

'You will be cool and collected, I am sure, sir, when they come here with the search-warrant. You'll not give them even the passing triumph of seeing that you are annoyed or offended?'

'That I will, my lad. I'm prepared now, and I'll take them as easy as if it was a morning call. Come in and have your breakfast with us, and say nothing about what we've been talking over.'

'Many thanks, sir, but I think—indeed I feel sure—I ought to go back at once. I have come here without my aunt's knowledge, and now that I have seen you and put you on your guard, I ought to go back as fast as I can.'

'So you shall, when you feed your beast and take something yourself. Poor old Kattoo isn't used to this sort of cross-country work, and she's panting there badly enough. That mare is twenty-one years of age.'

'She's fresh on her legs—not a curb nor a spavin, nor even a wind-gall about her,' said the young man.

'And the reward for it all is to be ridden like a steeple-chaser!' sighed old Kearney. 'Isn't that the world over? Break down early, and you are a good-for-nothing. Carry on your spirit, and your pluck, and your endurance to a green old age, and maybe they won't take it out of you!—always contrasting you, however, with yourself long ago, and telling the bystanders what a rare beast you were in your good days. Do you think they had dared to pass this insult upon *me* when I was

five-and-twenty or thirty? Do you think there's a man in the county would have come on this errand to search Kilgobbin when I was a young man, Mr. O'Shea?'

'I think you can afford to treat it with the contempt you have determined to show it.'

'That's all very fine now,' said Kearney; 'but there was a time I'd rather have chucked the chief constable out of the window and sent the sergeant after him.'

'I don't know whether that would have been better,' said Gorman, with a faint smile.

'Neither do I; but I know that I myself would have felt better and easier in my mind after it. I'd have eaten my breakfast with a good appetite, and gone about my day's work, whatever it was, with a free heart and fearless in my conscience! Ay, ay,' muttered he to himself, 'poor old Ireland isn't what it used to be!'

'I'm very sorry, sir, but though I'd like immensely to go back with you, don't you think I ought to return home?'

'I don't think anything of the sort. Your aunt and I had a tiff the last time we met, and that was some months ago. We're both of us old and cross-grained enough to keep up the grudge for the rest of our lives. Let us, then, make the most of the accident that has led you here, and when you go home, you shall be the bearer of the most submissive message I can invent to my old friend, and there shall be no terms too humble for me to ask her pardon.'

'That's enough, sir. I'll breakfast here.'

'Of course you'll say nothing of what brought you over here But I ought to warn you not to drop anything carelessly about politics in the county generally, for we have a young relative and a private secretary of the Lord-Lieutenant's visiting us, and it's as well to be cautious before him.'

The old man mentioned this circumstance in the cursory tone of an ordinary remark, but he could not conceal the pride he felt in the rank and condition of his guest. As for Gorman, perhaps it was his foreign breeding, perhaps his ignorance of all home matters generally, but he simply assented to the force of the caution, and paid no other attention to the incident.

'His name is Walpole, and he is related to half the peerage,' said the old man, with some irritation of manner.

A mere nod acknowledged the information, and he went on—

'This was the young fellow who was with Kitty on the night they attacked the castle, and he got both bones of his forearm smashed with a shot.'

'An ugly wound,' was the only rejoinder.

'So it was, and for a while they thought he'd lose the arm. Kitty says he behaved beautifully, cool and steady all through.'

Another nod, but this time Gorman's lips were firmly compressed.

'There's no denying it,' said the old man, with a touch of sadness in his voice—'there's no denying it, the English have courage; though,' added he afterwards, 'it's in a cold, sluggish way of their own, which we don't like here. There he is, now, that young fellow that has just parted from the two girls. The tall one is my niece—I must present you to her.'

CHAPTER XL

OLD MEMORIES

Though both Kate Kearney and young O'Shea had greatly outgrown each other's recollection, there were still traits of feature remaining, and certain tones of voice, by which they were carried back to old times and old associations.

Amongst the strange situations in life, there are few stranger, or, in certain respects, more painful, than the meeting after long absence of those who, when they had parted years before, were on terms of closest intimacy, and who now see each other changed by time, with altered habits and manners, and impressed in a variety of ways with influences and associations which impart their own stamp on character.

It is very difficult at such moments to remember how far we ourselves have changed in the interval, and how much of what we regard as altered in another may not simply be the new standpoint from which we are looking, and thus our friend may be graver, or sadder, or more thoughtful, or, as it may happen, seem less reflective and less considerative than we have thought him, all because the world has been meantime dealing with ourselves in such wise that qualities we once cared for have lost much of their value, and others that we had deemed of slight account have grown into importance with us.

Most of us know the painful disappointment of revisiting scenes which had impressed us strongly in early life: how the mountain we regarded with a wondering admiration had become a mere hill, and the romantic tarn a pool of sluggish water; and some of this same awakening pursues us in our renewal of old

intimacies, and we find ourselves continually warring with our recollections.

Besides this, there is another source of uneasiness that presses unceasingly. It is in imputing every change we discover, or think we discover in our friend, to some unknown influences that have asserted their power over him in our absence, and thus when we find that our arguments have lost their old force, and our persuasions can be stoutly resisted, we begin to think that some other must have usurped our place, and that there is treason in the heart we had deemed to be loyally our own.

How far Kate and Gorman suffered under these irritations, I do not stop to inquire, but certain it is, that all their renewed intercourse was little other than snappish reminders of unfavourable change in each, and assurances more frank than flattering that they had not improved in the interval.

'How well I know every tree and alley of this old garden!' said he, as they strolled along one of the walks in advance of the others. 'Nothing is changed here but the people.'

'And do you think we are?' asked she quietly.

'I should think I do! Not so much for your father, perhaps. I suppose men of his time of life change little, if at all; but you are as ceremonious as if I had been introduced to you this morning.'

'You addressed me so deferentially as Miss Kearney, and with such an assuring little intimation that you were not either very certain of *that*, that I should have been very courageous indeed to remind you that I once was Kate.'

'No, not Kate—Kitty,' rejoined he quickly.

'Oh yes, perhaps, when you were young, but we grow out of that.'

'Did we? And when?'

'When we gave up climbing cherry-trees, and ceased to pull each other's hair when we were angry.'

'Oh dear!' said he drearily, as his head sank heavily.

'You seem to sigh over those blissful times, Mr. O'Shea,' said she, 'as if they were terribly to be regretted.'

'So they are. So I feel them.'

'I never knew before that quarrelling left such pleasant associations.'

'My memory is good enough to remember times when we were not quarrelling—when I used to think you were nearer an angel than a human creature—ay, when I have had the boldness to tell you so.'

'You don't mean *that*?'

'I do mean it, and I should like to know why I should not mean it?'

'For a great many reasons—one amongst the number, that it would have been highly indiscreet to turn a poor child's head with a stupid flattery.'

'But were you a child? If I'm right, you were not very far from fifteen at the time I speak of.'

'How shocking that you should remember a young lady's age!'

'That is not the point at all,' said he, as though she had been endeavouring to introduce another issue.

'And what is the point, pray?' asked she haughtily.

'Well, it is this—how many have uttered what you call stupid flatteries since that time, and how have they been taken?'

'Is this a question?' asked she. 'I mean a question seeking to be answered?'

'I hope so.'

'Assuredly, then, Mr. O'Shea, however time has been dealing with *me*, it has contrived to take marvellous liberties with *you* since we met. Do you know, sir, that this is a speech you would not have uttered long ago for worlds?'

'If I have forgotten myself as well as you,' said he, with deep humility, 'I very humbly crave pardon. Not but there were days,' added he, 'when my mistake, if I made one, would have been forgiven without my asking.'

'There's a slight touch of presumption, sir, in telling me what a wonderful person I used to think you long ago.'

'So you did,' cried he eagerly. 'In return for the homage I laid at your feet—as honest an adoration as ever a heart beat with—you condescended to let me build my ambitions before you, and I must own you made the edifice very dear to me.'

'To be sure, I do remember it all, and I used to play or sing, "*Mein Schatz ist ein Reiter*," and take your word that you were going to be a Lancer—

> "In file arrayed,
> With helm and blade,
> And plume in the gay wind dancing."

I'm certain my cousin would be charmed to see you in all your bravery.'

'Your cousin will not speak to me for being an Austrian.'

'Has she told you so?'

'Yes, she said it at breakfast.'

'That denunciation does not sound very dangerously; is it not worth your while to struggle against a misconception?'

'I have had such luck in my present attempt as should scarcely raise my courage.'

'You are too ingenious by far for me, Mr. O'Shea,' said she carelessly. 'I neither remember so well as you, nor have I that nice subtlety in detecting all the lapses each of us has made since long ago. Try, however, if you cannot get on better with Mademoiselle Kostalergi, where there are no antecedents to disturb you.'

'I will; that is if she let me.'

'I trust she may, and not the less willingly, perhaps, as she evidently will not speak to Mr. Walpole.'

'Ah, indeed, and is *he* here?' he stopped and hesitated; and the full bold look she gave him did not lessen his embarrassment.

'Well, sir,' asked she, 'go on: is this another reminiscence?'

'No, Miss Kearney; I was only thinking of asking you who this Mr. Walpole was.'

'Mr. Cecil Walpole is a nephew or a something to the Lord-Lieutenant, whose private secretary he is. He is very clever, very amusing—sings, draws, rides, and laughs at the Irish to perfection. I hope you mean to like him.'

'Do you?'

'Of course, or I should not have bespoken your sympathy. My cousin used to like him, but somehow he has fallen out of favour with her.'

'Was he absent some time?' asked he, with a half-cunning manner.

'Yes, I believe there was something of that in it. He was not here for a considerable time, and when we saw him again, we almost owned we were disappointed. Papa is calling me from the window, pray excuse me for a moment.' She left him as she spoke, and ran rapidly back to the house, whence she returned almost immediately. 'It was to ask you to stop and dine here, Mr. O'Shea,' said she. 'There will be ample time to send back to Miss O'Shea, and if you care to have your dinner-dress, they can send it.'

'This is Mr. Kearney's invitation?' asked he.

'Of course; papa is the master at Kilgobbin.'

'But will Miss Kearney condescend to say that it is hers also?'

'Certainly, though I'm not aware what solemnity the engagement gains by my co-operation.'

'I accept at once, and if you allow me, I'll go back and send a line to my aunt to say so.'

'Don't you remember Mr. O'Shea, Dick?' asked she, as her brother lounged up, making his first appearance that day.

'I'd never have known you,' said he, surveying him from head to foot, without, however, any mark of cordiality in the recognition.

'All find me a good deal changed!' said the young fellow, drawing himself to his full height, and with an air that seemed to say—'and none the worse for it.'

'I used to fancy I was more than your match,' rejoined Dick, smiling; 'I suspect it's a mistake I am little likely to incur again.'

'Don't Dick, for he has got a very ugly way of ridding people of their illusions,' said Kate, as she turned once more and walked rapidly towards the house.

CHAPTER XLI

TWO FAMILIAR EPISTLES

THERE were a number of bolder achievements Gorman O'Shea would have dared rather than write a note; nor were the cares of the composition the only difficulties of the undertaking. He knew of but one style of correspondence—the report to his commanding officer, and in this he was aided by a formula to be filled up. It was not, then, till after several efforts, he succeeded in the following familiar epistle:—

'KILGOBBIN CASTLE.

'DEAR AUNT,—Don't blow up or make a rumpus, but if I had not taken the mare and come over here this morning, the rascally police with their search-warrant might have been down upon Mr. Kearney without a warning. They were all stiff and cold enough at first: they are nothing to brag of in the way of cordiality even yet—Dick especially—but they have asked me to stay and dine, and, I take it, it is the right thing to do. Send me over some things to dress with—and believe me your affectionate nephew, G. O'SHEA.

'I send the mare back, and shall walk home to-morrow morning.

'There's a great Castle swell here, a Mr. Walpole, but I have not made his acquaintance yet, and can tell nothing about him.'

Towards a late hour of the afternoon a messenger arrived with an ass-cart and several trunks from O'Shea's Barn, and with the following note:—

'Dear Nephew Gorman,—O'Shea's Barn is not an inn, nor are the horses there at public livery. So much for your information. As you seem fond of "warnings," let me give you one, which is, To mind your own affairs in preference to the interests of other people. The family at Kilgobbin are perfectly welcome —so far as I am concerned—to the fascinations of your society at dinner to-day, at breakfast to-morrow, and so on, with such regularity and order as the meals succeed. To which end, I have now sent you all the luggage belonging to you here.—I am, very respectfully, your aunt, Elizabeth O'Shea.'

The quaint, old-fashioned, rugged writing was marked throughout by a certain distinctness and accuracy that betoken care and attention—there was no evidence whatever of haste or passion—and this expression of a serious determination, duly weighed and resolved on, made itself very painfully felt by the young man as he read.

'I am turned out—in plain words, turned out!' said he aloud, as he sat with the letter spread out before him. 'It must have been no common quarrel—not a mere coldness between the families—when she resents my coming here in this fashion.' That innumerable differences could separate neighbours in Ireland, even persons with the same interests and the same religion, he well knew, and he solaced himself to think how he could get at the source of this disagreement, and what chance there might be of a reconciliation.

Of one thing he felt certain. Whether his aunt were right or wrong, whether tyrant or victim, he knew in his heart all the submission must come from the others. He had only to remember a few of the occasions in life in which he had to entreat his aunt's forgiveness for the injustice she had herself inflicted, to anticipate what humble pie Mathew Kearney must partake of in order to conciliate Miss Betty's favour.

'Meanwhile,' he thought, and not only thought, but said too—'Meanwhile, I am on the world.'

Up to this, she had allowed him a small yearly income. Father Luke, whose judgment on all things relating to continental life was unimpeachable, had told her that anything like the reputation of being well off or connected with wealthy people would lead a young man into ruin in the Austrian service; that with a sum of 3000 francs per annum—about £120—he would be in possession of something like the double of his pay, or rather more, and that with this he would be enabled to have all the necessaries and many of the comforts of his station, and still not be a mark for

that high play and reckless style of living that certain young Hungarians of family and large fortune affected; and so far the priest was correct, for the young Gorman was wasteful and extravagant from disposition, and his quarter's allowance disappeared almost when it came. His money out, he fell back at once to the penurious habits of the poorest subaltern about him, and lived on his florin-and-half per diem till his resources came round again. He hoped—of course he hoped—that this momentary fit of temper would not extend to stopping his allowance.

'She knows as well as any one,' muttered he, 'that though the baker's son from Prague, or the Amtmann's nephew from a Bavarian Dorf, may manage to "come through" with his pay, the young Englishman cannot. I can neither piece my own overalls, nor forswear stockings, nor can I persuade my stomach that it has had a full meal by tightening my girth-strap three or four holes.

'I'd go down to the ranks to-morrow rather than live that life of struggle and contrivance that reduces a man to playing a dreary game with himself, by which, while he feels like a pauper, he has to fancy he felt like a gentleman. No, no, I'll none of this. Scores of better men have served in the ranks. I'll just change my regiment. By a lucky chance, I don't know a man in the Walmoden Cuirassiers. I'll join them, and nobody will ever be the wiser.'

There is a class of men who go through life building very small castles, and are no more discouraged by the frailty of the architecture than is a child with his toy-house. This was Gorman's case; aud now that he had found a solution of his difficulties in the Walmoden Cuirassiers, he really dressed for dinner in very tolerable spirits. 'It's droll enough,' thought he, 'to go down to dine amongst all these "swells," and to think that the fellow behind my chair is better off than myself.' The very uncertainty of his fate supplied excitement to his spirits, for it is amongst the privileges of the young that mere flurry can be pleasurable.

When Gorman reached the drawing-room, he found only one person. This was a young man in a shooting-coat, who, deep in the recess of a comfortable arm-chair, sat with the *Times* at his feet, and to all appearance as if half dozing.

He looked around, however, as young O'Shea came forward, and said carelessly, 'I suppose it's time to go and dress—if I could.'

O'Shea making no reply, the other added, 'That is, if I have not overslept dinner altogether.'

'I hope not, sincerely,' rejoined the other, 'or I shall be a partner in the misfortune.'

'Ah, you're the Austrian,' said Walpole, as he stuck his glass in his eye and surveyed him.

'Yes; and you are the private secretary of the Governor.'

'Only we don't call him Governor. We say Viceroy here.'

'With all my heart, Viceroy be it.'

There was a pause now—each, as it were, standing on his guard to resent any liberty of the other. At last Walpole said, 'I don't think you were in the house when that stupid stipendiary fellow called here this morning?'

'No; I was strolling across the fields. He came with the police, I suppose?'

'Yes, he came on the track of some Fenian leader—a droll thought enough anywhere out of Ireland, to search for a rebel under a magistrate's roof; not but there was something still more Irish in the incident.'

'How was that?' asked O'Shea eagerly.

'I chanced to be out walking with the ladies when the escort came, and as they failed to find the man they were after, they proceeded to make a diligent search for his papers and letters. That taste for practical joking, that seems an instinct in this country, suggested to Mr. Kearney to direct the fellows to my room, and what do you think they have done? Carried off bodily all my baggage, and left me with nothing but the clothes I'm wearing!'

'What a lark!' cried O'Shea, laughing.

'Yes, I take it that is the national way to look at these things; but that passion for absurdity and for ludicrous situations has not the same hold on us English.'

'I know that. You are too well off to be droll.'

'Not exactly that; but when we want to laugh we go to the Adelphi.'

'Heaven help you if you have to pay people to make fun for you!'

Before Walpole could make rejoinder, the door opened to admit the ladies, closely followed by Mr. Kearney and Dick.

'Not mine the fault if I disgrace your dinner-table by such a costume as this,' cried Walpole.

'I'd have given twenty pounds if they'd have carried off yourself as the rebel!' said the old man, shaking with laughter. 'But there's the soup on the table. Take my niece, Mr. Walpole; Gorman, give your arm to my daughter. Dick and I will bring up the rear.'

CHAPTER XLII

AN EVENING IN THE DRAWING-ROOM

THE fatalism of youth, unlike that of age, is all rose-coloured. That which is coming, and is decreed to come, cannot be very disagreeable. This is the theory of the young, and differs terribly from the experiences of after-life. Gorman O'Shea had gone to dinner with about as heavy a misfortune as could well befall him, so far as his future in life was concerned. All he looked forward to and hoped for was lost to him: the aunt who, for so many years, had stood to him in place of all family, had suddenly thrown him off, and declared that she would see him no more; the allowance she had hitherto given him withdrawn, it was impossible he could continue to hold his place in his regiment. Should he determine not to return, it was desertion—should he go back, it must be to declare that he was a ruined man, and could only serve in the ranks. These were the thoughts he revolved while he dressed for dinner, and dressed, let it be owned, with peculiar care; but when the task had been accomplished, and he descended to the drawing-room, such was the elasticity of his young temperament, every thought of coming evil was merged in the sense of present enjoyment, and the merry laughter which he overheard as he opened the door, obliterated all notion that life had anything before him except what was agreeable and pleasant.

'We want to know if you play croquet, Mr. O'Shea?' said Nina as he entered. 'And we want also to know, are you a captain, or a Rittmeister, or a major? You can scarcely be a colonel.'

'Your last guess I answer first. I am only a lieutenant, and even that very lately. As to croquet, if it be not your foreign mode of pronouncing cricket, I never even saw it.'

'It is not my foreign mode of pronouncing cricket, Herr Lieutenant,' said she pertly, 'but I guessed already you had never heard of it.'

'It is an out-of-door affair,' said Dick indolently, 'made for the diffusion of worked petticoats and Balmoral boots.'

'I should say it is the game of billiards brought down to universal suffrage and the million,' lisped out Walpole.

''Faith,' cried old Kearney, 'I'd say it was just football with a stick.'

'At all events,' said Kate, 'we purpose to have a grand match to-morrow. Mr. Walpole and I are against Nina and Dick, and we are to draw lots for you, Mr. O'Shea.'

'My position, if I understand it aright, is not a flattering one,' said he, laughing.

'We'll take him,' cried Nina at once. 'I'll give him a private lesson in the morning, and I'll answer for his performance. These creatures,' added she, in a whisper, 'are so drilled in Austria, you can teach them anything.'

Now, as the words were spoken O'Shea caught them, and drawing close to her, said, 'I do hope I'll justify that flattering opinion.' But her only recognition was a look of half-defiant astonishment at his boldness.

A very noisy discussion now ensued as to whether croquet was worthy to be called a game or not, and what were its laws and rules—points which Gorman followed with due attention, but very little profit; all Kate's good sense and clearness being cruelly dashed by Nina's ingenious interruptions and Walpole's attempts to be smart and witty, even where opportunity scarcely offered the chance.

'Next to looking on at the game,' cried old Kearney at last, 'the most tiresome thing I know of is to hear it talked over. Come, Nina, and give me a song.'

'What shall it be, uncle?' said she, as she opened the piano.

'Something Irish, I'd say, if I were to choose for myself. We've plenty of old tunes, Mr. Walpole,' said Kearney, turning to that gentleman, 'that rebellion, as you call it, has never got hold of. There's "*Cushla Macree*" and the "*Cailan deas cruidhte na Mbo.*"'

'Very like hard swearing that,' said Walpole to Nina; but his simper and his soft accent were only met by a cold blank look, as though she had not understood his liberty in addressing her. Indeed, in her distant manner, and even repelling coldness, there was what might have disconcerted any composure less consummate than his own. It was, however, evidently Walpole's aim to assume that she felt her relation towards him, and not altogether without some cause; while she, on her part, desired to repel the insinuation by a show of utter indifference. She would willingly, in this contingency, have encouraged her cousin, Dick Kearney, and even led him on to little displays of attention; but Dick held aloof, as though not knowing the meaning of this favourable turn towards him. He would not be cheated by coquetry. How many men are of this temper, and who never understand that it is by surrendering ourselves to numberless little voluntary deceptions of

this sort, we arrive at intimacies the most real and most truthful.

She next tried Gorman, and here her success was complete. All those womanly prettinesses, which are so many modes of displaying graceful attraction of voice, look, gesture, or attitude, were especially dear to him. Not only they gave beauty its chief charm, but they constituted a sort of game, whose address was quickness of eye, readiness of perception, prompt reply, and that refined tact that can follow out one thought in a conversation just as you follow a melody through a mass of variations.

Perhaps the young soldier did not yield himself the less readily to these captivations that Kate Kearney's manner towards him was studiously cold and ceremonious.

'The other girl is more like the old friend,' muttered he, as he chatted on with her about Rome, and Florence, and Venice, imperceptibly gliding into the language which the names of places suggested.

'If any had told me that I ever could have talked thus freely and openly with an Austrian soldier, I'd not have believed him,' said she at length, 'for all my sympathies in Italy were with the National party.'

'But we were not the "Barbari" in your recollection, mademoiselle,' said he. 'We were out of Italy before you could have any feeling for either party.'

'The tradition of all your cruelties has survived you, and I am sure, if you were wearing your white coat still, I'd hate you.'

'You are giving me another reason to ask for a longer leave of absence,' said he, bowing courteously.

'And this leave of yours—how long does it last?'

'I am afraid to own to myself. Wednesday fortnight is the end of it; that is, it gives me four days after that to reach Vienna.'

'And presenting yourself in humble guise before your colonel, to say, "*Ich melde mich gehorsamst.*"'

'Not exactly that—but something like it.'

'I'll be the Herr Oberst Lieutenant,' said she, laughing; 'so come forward now and clap your heels together, and let us hear how you utter your few syllables in true abject fashion. I'll sit here, and receive you.' As she spoke, she threw herself into an arm-chair, and assuming a look of intense hauteur and defiance, affected to stroke an imaginary moustache with one hand, while with the other she waved a haughty gesture of welcome.

'I have outstayed my leave,' muttered Gorman, in a tremulous tone. 'I hope my colonel, with that bland mercy which charac-

He knelt down on one knee before her.

terises him, will forgive my fault, and let me ask his pardon.' And with this, he knelt down on one knee before her, and kissed her hand.

'What liberties are these, sir?' cried she, so angrily, that it was not easy to say whether the anger was not real.

'It is the latest rule introduced into our service,' said he, with mock humility.

'Is that a comedy they are acting yonder,' said Walpole, 'or is it a proverb?'

'Whatever the drama,' replied Kate coldly, 'I don't think they want a public.'

'You may go back to your duty, Herr Lieutenant,' said Nina proudly, and with a significant glance towards Kate. 'Indeed, I suspect you have been rather neglecting it of late.' And with this she sailed majestically away towards the end of the room.

'I wish I could provoke even that much of jealousy from the other,' muttered Gorman to himself, as he bit his lip in passion. And certainly, if a look and manner of calm unconcern meant anything, there was little that seemed less likely.

'I am glad you are going to the piano, Nina,' said Kate. 'Mr. Walpole has been asking me by what artifice you could be induced to sing something of Mendelssohn.'

'I am going to sing an Irish ballad for that Austrian patriot, who, like his national poet, thinks "Ireland a beautiful country to live out of."' Though a haughty toss of her head accompanied these words, there was a glance in her eye towards Gorman that plainly invited a renewal of their half-flirting hostilities.

'When I left it, *you* had not been here,' said he, with an obsequious tone, and an air of deference only too marked in its courtesy.

A slight, very faint blush on her cheek showed that she rather resented than accepted the flattery, but she appeared to be occupied in looking through the music-books, and made no rejoinder.

'We want Mendelssohn, Nina,' said Kate.

'Or at least Spohr,' added Walpole.

'I never accept dictation about what I sing,' muttered Nina, only loud enough to be overheard by Gorman. 'People don't tell you what theme you are to talk on; they don't presume to say, "Be serious or be witty." They don't tell you to come to the aid of their sluggish natures by passion, or to dispel their dreariness by flights of fancy; and why are they to dare all this to *us* who speak through song?'

'Just because you alone can do these things,' said Gorman, in the same low voice as she had spoken in.

'Can I help you in your search, dearest?' said Kate, coming over to the piano.

'Might I hope to be of use?' asked Walpole.

'Mr. O'Shea wants me to sing something for *him*,' said Nina coldly. 'What is it to be?' asked she of Gorman.

With the readiness of one who could respond to any sudden call upon his tact, Gorman at once took up a piece of music from the mass before him, and said, 'Here is what I have been searching for.' It was a little Neapolitan ballad, of no peculiar beauty, but one of those simple melodies in which the rapid transition from deep feeling to a wild, almost reckless, gaiety imparts all the character.

'Yes, I'll sing that,' said Nina; and almost in the same breath the notes came floating through the air, slow and sad at first, as though labouring under some heavy sorrow; the very syllables faltered on her lips like a grief struggling for utterance—when, just as a thrilling cadence died slowly away, she burst forth into the wildest and merriest strain, something so impetuous in gaiety, that the singer seemed to lose all control of expression, and floated away in sound with every caprice of enraptured imagination. When in the very whirlwind of this impetuous gladness, as though a memory of a terrible sorrow had suddenly crossed her, she ceased; then, in tones of actual agony, her voice rose to a cry of such utter misery as despair alone could utter. The sounds died slowly away as though lingeringly. Two bold chords followed, and she was silent.

None spoke in the room. Was this real passion, or was it the mere exhibition of an accomplished artist, who could call up expression at will, as easily as a painter could heighten colour? Kate Kearney evidently believed the former, as her heaving chest and her tremulous lip betrayed, while the cold, simpering smile on Walpole's face, and the 'brava, bravissima' in which he broke the silence, vouched how he had interpreted that show of emotion.

'If that is singing, I wonder what is crying,' cried old Kearney, while he wiped his eyes, very angry at his own weakness. 'And now will any one tell me what it was all about?'

'A young girl, sir,' replied Gorman, 'who, by a great effort, has rallied herself to dispel her sorrow and be merry, suddenly remembers that her sweetheart may not love her, and the more she dwells on the thought, the more firmly she believes it. That was the cry, "He never loved me," that went to all our hearts.'

''Faith, then, if Nina has to say that,' said the old man, 'Heaven help the others.'

'Indeed, uncle, you are more gallant than all these young gentlemen,' said Nina, rising and approaching him.

'Why they are not all at your feet this moment is more than I can tell. They're always telling me the world is changed, and I begin to see it now.'

'I suspect, sir, it's pretty much what it used to be,' lisped out Walpole. 'We are only less demonstrative than our fathers.'

'Just as I am less extravagant than mine,' cried Kilgobbin, 'because I have not got it to spend.'

'I hope Mademoiselle Nina judges us more mercifully,' said Walpole.

'Is that song a favourite of yours?' asked she of Gorman, without noticing Walpole's remark in any way.

'No,' said he bluntly; 'it makes me feel like a fool, and, I am afraid, look like one too, when I hear it.'

'I'm glad there's even that much blood in you,' cried old Kearney, who had caught the words. 'Oh dear! oh dear! England need never be afraid of the young generation.'

'That seems to be a very painful thought to you, sir,' said Walpole.

'And so it is,' replied he. 'The lower we bend, the more you'll lay on us. It was your language, and what you call your civilisation, broke us down first, and the little spirit that fought against either is fast dying out of us.'

'Do you want Mr. Walpole to become a Fenian, papa?' asked Kate.

'You see, they took him for one to-day,' broke in Dick, 'when they came and carried off all his luggage.'

'By the way,' interposed Walpole, 'we must take care that that stupid blunder does not get into the local papers, or we shall have it circulated by the London press.'

'I have already thought of that,' said Dick, 'and I shall go into Moate to-morrow and see about it.'

'Does that mean to say that you desert croquet?' said Nina imperiously.

'You have got Lieutenant O'Shea in my place, and a better player than me already.'

'I fear I must take my leave to-morrow,' said Gorman, with a touch of real sorrow, for in secret he knew not whither he was going.

'Would your aunt not spare you to us for a few days?' said the old man. 'I am in no favour with her just now, but she would scarcely refuse what we would all deem a great favour.'

'My aunt would not think the sacrifice too much for her,' said Gorman, trying to laugh at the conceit.

'You shall stay,' murmured Nina, in a tone only audible to him; and by a slight bow he acknowledged the words as a command.

'I believe my best way,' said Gorman gaily, 'will be to outstay my leave, and take my punishment, whatever it be, when I go back again.'

'That is military morality,' said Walpole, in a half-whisper to Kate, but to be overheard by Nina. 'We poor civilians don't understand how to keep a debtor and creditor account with conscience.'

'Could you manage to provoke that man to quarrel with you?' said Nina secretly to Gorman, while her eyes glanced towards Walpole.

'I think I might; but what then? *He* wouldn't fight, and the rest of England would shun me.'

'That is true,' said she slowly. 'When any is injured here, he tries to make money of it. I don't suppose you want money?'

'Not earned in that fashion, certainly. But I think they are saying good-night.'

'They're always boasting about the man that found out the safety-lamp,' said old Kearney, as he moved away; 'but give me the fellow that invented a flat candlestick!'

CHAPTER XLIII

SOME NIGHT-THOUGHTS

When Gorman reached his room, into which a rich flood of moonlight was streaming, he extinguished his candle, and, seating himself at the open window, lighted his cigar, seriously believing he was going to reflect on his present condition, and forecast something of the future. Though he had spoken so cavalierly of outstaying his time, and accepting arrest afterwards, the jest was by no means so palatable now that he was alone, and could own to himself that the leave he possessed was the unlimited liberty to be houseless and a vagabond, to have none to claim, no roof to shelter him.

His aunt's law-agent, the same Mr. M'Keown who acted for Lord Kilgobbin, had once told Gorman that all the King's County property of the O'Sheas was entailed upon him, and that his aunt had no power to alienate it. It is true the old lady disputed this

position, and so strongly resented even allusion to it, that, for the sake of inheriting that twelve thousand pounds she possessed in Dutch stock, M'Keown warned Gorman to avoid anything that might imply his being aware of this fact.

Whether a general distrust of all legal people and their assertions was the reason, or whether mere abstention from the topic had impaired the force of its truth, or whether—more likely than either—he would not suffer himself to question the intentions of one to whom he owed so much, certain is it young O'Shea almost felt as much averse to the belief as the old lady herself, and resented the thought of its being true, as of something that would detract from the spirit of the affection she had always borne him, and that he repaid by a love as faithful.

'No, no. Confound it!' he would say to himself. 'Aunt Betty loves me, and money has no share in the affection I bear her. If she knew I must be her heir, she'd say so frankly and freely. She'd scorn the notion of doling out to me as benevolence what one day would be my own by right. She is proud and intolerant enough, but she is seldom unjust—never so willingly and consciously. If, then, she has not said O'Shea's Barn must be mine some time, it is because she knows well it cannot be true. Besides, this very last step of hers, this haughty dismissal of me from her house, implies the possession of a power which she would not dare to exercise if she were but a life-tenant of the property. Last of all, had she speculated ever so remotely on my being the proprietor of Irish landed property, it was most unlikely she would so strenuously have encouraged me to pursue my career as an Austrian soldier, and turn all my thoughts to my prospects under the Empire.'

In fact, she never lost the opportunity of reminding him how unfit he was to live in Ireland or amongst Irishmen.

Such reflections as I have briefly hinted at here took him some time to arrive at, for his thoughts did not come freely, or rapidly make place for others. The sum of them, however, was that he was thrown upon the world, and just at the very threshold of life, and when it held out its more alluring prospects.

There is something peculiarly galling to the man who is wincing under the pang of poverty to find that the world regards him as rich and well off, and totally beyond the accidents of fortune. It is not simply that he feels how his every action will be misinterpreted and mistaken, and a spirit of thrift, if not actual shabbiness, ascribed to all that he does, but he also regards himself as a sort of imposition or sham, who has gained access to a place he has no right to occupy, and to associate on terms of

equality with men of tastes and habits and ambitions totally above his own. It was in this spirit he remembered Nina's chance expression, 'I don't suppose *you* want money!' There could be no other meaning in the phrase than some foregone conclusion about his being a man of fortune. Of course she acquired this notion from those around her. As a stranger to Ireland, all she knew, or thought she knew, had been conveyed by others. 'I don't suppose *you* want money' was another way of saying, 'You are your aunt's heir. You are the future owner of the O'Shea estates. No vast property, it is true; but quite enough to maintain the position of a gentleman.'

'Who knows how much of this Lord Kilgobbin or his son Dick believed?' thought he. 'But certainly my old playfellow Kate has no faith in the matter, or if she have, it has little weight with her in her estimate of me.

'It was in this very room I was lodged something like five years ago. It was at this very window I used to sit at night, weaving Heaven knows what dreams of a future. I was very much in love in those days, and a very honest and loyal love it was. I wanted to be very great, and very gallant, and distinguished, and above all, very rich; but only for *her*, only that *she* might be surrounded with every taste and luxury that became her, and that she should share them with me. I knew well she was better than me—better in every way: not only purer, and simpler, and more gentle, but more patient, more enduring, more tenacious of what was true, and more decidedly the enemy of what was merely expedient. Then, was she not proud? not with the pride of birth or station, or of an old name and a time-honoured house, but proud that whatever she did or said amongst the tenantry or the neighbours, none ever ventured to question or even qualify the intention that suggested it. The utter impossibility of ascribing a double motive to her, or of imagining any object in what she counselled but the avowed one, gave her a pride that accompanied her through every hour of life.

'Last of all, she believed in *me*—believed I was going to be one day something very famous and distinguished: a gallant soldier, whose very presence gave courage to the men who followed him, and with a name repeated in honour over Europe. The day was too short for these fancies, for they grew actually as we fed them, and the wildest flight of imagination led us on to the end of the time when there would be but one hope, one ambition, and one heart between us.

'I am convinced that had any one at that time hinted to her that I was to inherit the O'Shea estates, he would have dealt a

most dangerous blow to her affection for me. The romance of that unknown future had a great share in our compact. And then we were so serious about it all—the very gravity it impressed being an ecstasy to our young hearts in the thought of self-importance and responsibility. Nor were we without our little tiffs—those lovers' quarrels that reveal what a terrible civil war can rage within the heart that rebels against itself. I know the very spot where we quarrelled; I could point to the miles of way we walked side by side without a word; and oh! was it not on that very bed I have passed the night sobbing till I thought my heart would break, all because I had not fallen at her feet and begged her forgiveness ere we parted? Not that she was without her self-accusings too; for I remember one way in which she expressed sorrow for having done me wrong was to send me a shower of rose-leaves from her little terraced garden; and as they fell in shoals across my window, what a balm and bliss they shed over my heart! Would I not give every hope I have to bring it all back again? to live it over once more—to lie at her feet in the grass, affecting to read to her, but really watching her long black lashes as they rested on her cheek, or that quivering lip as it trembled with emotion. How I used to detest that work which employed the blue-veined hand I loved to hold within my own, kissing it at every pause in the reading, or whenever I could pretext a reason to question her! And now, here I am in the self-same place, amidst the same scenes and objects. Nothing changed but *herself*! She, however, will remember nothing of the past, or if she does, it is with repugnance and regret; her manner to me is a sort of cold defiance, not to dare to revive our old intimacy, nor to fancy that I can take up our acquaintance-ship from the past. I almost fancied she looked resentfully at the Greek girl for the freedom to which she admitted me—not but there was in the other's coquetry the very stamp of that levity other women are so ready to take offence at; in fact, it constitutes amongst women exactly the same sort of outrage, the same breach of honour and loyalty, as cheating at play does amongst men, and the offenders are as much socially outlawed in one case as in the other. I wonder, am I what is called falling in love with the Greek—that is, I wonder, have the charms of her astonishing beauty and the grace of her manner, and the thousand seductions of her voice, her gestures, and her walk, above all, so captivated me that I do not want to go back on the past, and may hope soon to repay Miss Kate Kearney by an indifference the equal of her own? I don't think so. Indeed, I feel that even when Nina was interesting me most, I was stealing

secret glances towards Kate, and cursing that fellow Walpole for the way he was engaging her attention. Little the Greek suspected, when she asked if "I could not fix a quarrel on him," with what a motive it was that my heart jumped at the suggestion! He is so studiously ceremonious and distant with me; he seems to think I am not one of those to be admitted to closer intimacy. I know that English theory of "the unsafe man," by which people of unquestionable courage avoid contact with all schooled to other ways and habits than their own. I hate it. "I am unsafe," to his thinking. Well, if having no reason to care for safety be sufficient, he is not far wrong. Dick Kearney, too, is not very cordial. He scarcely seconded his father's invitation to me, and what he did say was merely what courtesy obliged. So that in reality, though the old lord was hearty and good-natured, I believe I am here now because Mademoiselle Nina commanded me, rather than from any other reason. If this be true, it is, to say the least, a sorry compliment to my sense of delicacy. Her words were, "You shall stay," and it is upon this I am staying.'

As though the air of the room grew more hard to breathe with this thought before him, he arose and leaned half-way out of the window.

As he did so, his ear caught the sound of voices. It was Kate and Nina, who were talking on the terrace above his head.

'I declare, Nina,' said Kate, 'you have stripped every leaf off my poor ivy-geranium; there's nothing left of it but bare branches.'

'There goes the last handful,' said the other, as she threw them over the parapet, some falling on Gorman as he leaned out. 'It was a bad habit, I learned from yourself, child. I remember when I came here, you used to do this each night, like a religious rite.'

'I suppose they were the dried or withered leaves that I threw away,' said Kate, with a half-irritation in her voice.

'No, they were not. They were oftentimes from your prettiest roses, and as I watched you, I saw it was in no distraction or inadvertence you were doing this, for you were generally silent and thoughtful some time before, and there was even an air of sadness about you, as though a painful thought was bringing its gloomy memories.'

'What an object of interest I have been to you without suspecting it,' said Kate coldly.

'It is true,' said the other, in the same tone; 'they who make few confidences suggest much ingenuity. If you had a meaning

in this act and told me what it was, it is more than likely I had forgotten all about it ere now. You preferred secrecy, and you made me curious.'

'There was nothing to reward curiosity,' said she, in the same measured tone; then, after a moment, she added, 'I 'm sure I never sought to ascribe some hidden motive to *you*. When *you* left my plants leafless, I was quite content to believe that you were mischievous without knowing it.'

'I read you differently,' said Nina. 'When *you* do mischief you mean mischief. Now I became so—so—what shall I call it, *intriguée* about this little "fetish" of yours, that I remember well the night you first left off and never resumed it.'

'And when was that?' asked Kate carelessly.

'On a certain Friday, the night Miss O'Shea dined here last; was it not a Friday?'

'Fridays, we fancy, are unlucky days,' said Kate, in a voice of easy indifference.

'I wonder which are the lucky ones?' said Nina, sighing. 'They are certainly not put down in the Irish almanac. By the way, is not this a Friday?'

'Mr. O'Shea will not call it amongst his unlucky days,' said Kate laughingly.

'I almost think I like your Austrian,' said the other.

'Only don't call him *my* Austrian.'

'Well, he was yours till you threw him off. No, don't be angry: I am only talking in that careless slang we all use when we mean nothing, just as people employ counters instead of money at cards; but I like him: he has that easy flippancy in talk that asks for no effort to follow, and he says his little nothings nicely, and he is not too eager as to great ones, or too energetic, which you all are here. I like him.'

'I fancied you liked the eager and enthusiastic people, and that you felt a warm interest in Donogan's fate.'

'Yes, I do hope they 'll not catch him. It would be too horrid to think of any one we had known being hanged! And then, poor fellow, he was very much in love.'

'Poor fellow!' sighed out Kate.

'Not but it was the only gleam of sunlight in his existence; he could go away and fancy that, with Heaven knows what chances of fortune, he might have won me.'

'Poor fellow!' cried Kate, more sorrowfully than before.

'No, far from it, but very "happy fellow" if he could feed his heart with such a delusion.'

'And you think it fair to let him have this delusion?'

'Of course I do. I'd no more rob him of it than I'd snatch a life-buoy from a drowning man. Do you fancy, child, that the swimmer will always go about with the corks that have saved his life?'

'These mock analogies are sorry arguments,' said Kate.

'Tell me, does your Austrian sing? I see he understands music, but I hope he can sing.'

'I can tell you next to nothing of my Austrian—if he must be called so. It is five years since we met, and all I know is how little like he seems to what he once was.'

'I'm sure he is vastly improved: a hundred times better mannered; with more ease, more quickness, and more readiness in conversation. I like him.'

'I trust he'll find out his great good-fortune—that is, if it be not a delusion.'

For a few seconds there was a silence—a silence so complete that Gorman could hear the rustle of a dress as Nina moved from her place, and seated herself on the battlement of the terrace. He then could catch the low murmuring sounds of her voice, as she hummed an air to herself, and at length traced it to be the song she had sung that same evening in the drawing-room. The notes came gradually more and more distinct, the tones swelled out into greater fullness, and at last, with one long-sustained cadence of thrilling passion, she cried, '*Non mi amava—non mi amava!*' with an expression of heart-breaking sorrow, the last syllables seemed to linger on the lips as if a hope was deserting them for ever. '*Oh, non mi amava!*' cried she, and her voice trembled as though the avowal of her despair was the last effort of her strength. Slowly and faintly the sounds died away, while Gorman, leaning out to the utmost to catch the dying notes, strained his hearing to drink them in. All was still, and then suddenly, with a wild roulade that sounded at first like the passage of a musical scale, she burst out into a fit of laughter, crying '*Non mi amava,*' through the sounds, in a half-frantic mockery. '*No, no, non mi amava,*' laughed she out, as she walked back into the room. The window was now closed with a heavy bang, and all was silent in the house.

'And these are the affections we break our hearts for!' cried Gorman, as he threw himself on his bed, and covered his face with both his hands.

CHAPTER XLIV

THE HEAD CONSTABLE

THE Inspector, or, to use the irreverent designation of the neighbourhood, the Head Peeler, who had carried away Walpole's luggage and papers, no sooner discovered the grave mistake he had committed, than he hastened to restore them, and was waiting personally at Kilgobbin Castle to apologise for the blunder, long before any of the family had come downstairs. His indiscretion might cost him his place, and Captain Curtis, who had to maintain a wife and family, three saddle-horses, and a green uniform with more gold on it than a field-marshal's, felt duly anxious and uneasy for what he had done.

'Who is that gone down the road?' asked he, as he stood at the window, while a woman was setting the room in order.

'Sure it's Miss Kate taking the dogs out. Isn't she always the first up of a morning?' Though the captain had little personal acquaintance with Miss Kearney, he knew her well by reputation, and knew therefore that he might safely approach her to ask a favour. He overtook her at once, and in a few words made known the difficulty in which he found himself.

'Is it not after all a mere passing mistake, which once apologised for is forgotten altogether?' asked she. 'Mr. Walpole is surely not a person to bear any malice for such an incident?'

'I don't know that, Miss Kearney,' said he doubtingly. 'His papers have been thoroughly ransacked, and old Mr. Flood, the Tory magistrate, has taken copies of several letters and documents, all of course under the impression that they formed part of a treasonable correspondence.'

'Was it not very evident that the papers could not have belonged to a Fenian leader? Was not any mistake in the matter easily avoided?'

'Not at once, because there was first of all a sort of account of the insurrectionary movement here, with a number of queries, such as, "Who is M——?" "Are F. Y—— and M'Causland the same person?" "What connection exists between the Meath outrages and the late events in Tipperary?" "How is R—— to explain his conduct sufficiently to be retained in the Commission of the Peace?" In a word, Miss Kearney, all the troublesome details by which a Ministry have to keep their own supporters in decent order, are here hinted at, if not more, and it

lies with a batch of red-hot Tories to make a terrible scandal out of this affair.'

'It is graver than I suspected,' said she thoughtfully.

'And I may lose my place,' muttered Curtis, 'unless, indeed, you would condescend to say a word for me to Mr. Walpole.'

'Willingly, if it were of any use, but I think my cousin, Mademoiselle Kostalergi, would be likelier of success, and here she comes.'

Nina came forward at that moment, with that indolent grace of movement with which she swept the greensward of the lawn as though it were the carpet of a saloon. With a brief introduction of Mr. Curtis, her cousin Kate, in a few words, conveyed the embarrassment of his present position, and his hope that a kindly intercession might avert his danger.

'What droll people you must be not to find out that the letters of a Viceroy's secretary could not be the correspondence of a rebel leader,' said Nina superciliously.

'I have already told Miss Kearney how that fell out,' said he; 'and I assure you there was enough in those papers to mystify better and clearer heads.'

'But you read the addresses, and saw how the letters began, "My dear Mr. Walpole," or "Dear Walpole"?'

'And thought they had been purloined. Have I not found "Dear Clarendon" often enough in the same packet with cross-bones and a coffin?'

'What a country!' said Nina, with a sigh.

'Very like Greece, I suppose,' said Kate tartly; then, suddenly, 'Will you undertake to make this gentleman's peace with Mr. Walpole, and show how the whole was a piece of ill-directed zeal?'

'Indiscreet zeal.'

'Well, indiscreet, if you like it better.'

'And you fancied, then, that all the fine linen and purple you carried away were the properties of a head-centre?'

'We thought so.'

'And the silver objects of the dressing-table, and the ivory inlaid with gold, and the trifles studded with turquoise?'

'They might have been Donogan's. Do you know, mademoiselle, that this same Donogan was a man of fortune, and in all the society of the first men at Oxford when—a mere boy at the time—he became a rebel?'

'How nice of him! What a fine fellow!'

'I 'd say what a fool!' continued Curtis. 'He had no need to risk his neck to achieve a station, the thing was done for him.

Nina came forward at that moment.

He had a good house and a good estate in Kilkenny; I have caught salmon in the river that washes the foot of his lawn.'

'And what has become of it; does he still own it?'

'Not an acre—not a rood of it; sold every square yard of it to throw the money into the Fenian treasury. Rifled artillery, Colt's revolvers, Remingtons, and Parrot guns have walked off with the broad acres.'

'Fine fellow—a fine fellow!' cried Nina enthusiastically.

'That fine fellow has done a deal of mischief,' said Kate thoughtfully.

'He has escaped, has he not?' asked Nina.

'We hope not—that is, we know that he is about to sail for St. John's by a clipper now in Belfast, and we shall have a fast steam-corvette ready to catch her in the Channel. He'll be under Yankee colours, it is true, and claim an American citizenship; but we must run risks sometimes, and this is one of those times.'

'But you know where he is now? Why not apprehend him on shore?'

'The very thing we do not know, mademoiselle. I'd rather be sure of it than have five thousand pounds in my hand. Some say he is here, in the neighbourhood; some that he is gone south; others declare that he has reached Liverpool. All we really do know is about the ship that he means to sail in, and on which the second mate has informed us.'

'And all your boasted activity is at fault,' said she insolently, 'when you have to own you cannot track him.'

'Nor is it so easy, mademoiselle, where a whole population befriend and feel for him.'

'And if they do, with what face can you prosecute what has the entire sympathy of a nation?'

'Don't provoke answers which are sure not to satisfy you, and which you could but half comprehend; but tell Mr. Curtis you will use your influence to make Mr. Walpole forget this mishap.'

'But I do want to go to the bottom of this question. I will insist on learning why people rebel here.'

'In that case, I'll go home to breakfast, and I'll be quite satisfied if I see you at luncheon,' said Kate.

'Do, pray, Mr. Curtis, tell me all about it. Why do some people shoot the others who are just as much Irish as themselves? Why do hungry people kill the cattle and never eat them? And why don't the English go away and leave a country where nobody likes them? If there be a reason for these things, let me hear it.'

'Bye-bye,' said Kate, waving her hand, as she turned away.

'You are so ungenerous,' cried Nina, hurrying after her; 'I

am a stranger, and would naturally like to learn all that I could of the country and the people; here is a gentleman full of the very knowledge I am seeking. He knows all about these terrible Fenians. What will they do with Donogan if they take him?'

'Transport him for life; they'll not hang him, I think.'

'That's worse than hanging. I mean—that is—Miss Kearney would rather they'd hang him.'

'I have not said so,' replied Kate, 'and I don't suspect I think so, either.'

'Well,' said Nina, after a pause, 'let us go back to breakfast. You'll see Mr. Walpole—he's sure to be down by that time; and I'll tell him what your wish is, that he must not think any more of the incident; that it was a piece of official stupidity, done, of course, out of the best motives; and that if he should cut a ridiculous figure at the end, he has only himself to blame for the worse than ambiguity of his private papers.'

'I do not know that I'd exactly say that,' said Kate, who felt some difficulty in not laughing at the horror-struck expression of Mr. Curtis's face.

'Well, then, I'll say—this was what I wished to tell you, but my cousin Kate interposed and suggested that a little adroit flattery of you, and some small coquetries that might make you believe you were charming, would be the readiest mode to make you forget anything disagreeable, and she would charge herself with the task.'

'Do so,' said Kate calmly; 'and let us now go back to breakfast.'

CHAPTER XLV

SOME IRISHRIES

That which the English irreverently call 'chaff' enters largely as an element into Irish life; and when Walpole stigmatised the habit to Joe Atlee as essentially that of the smaller island, he was not far wrong. I will not say that it is a high order of wit —very elegant, or very refined; but it is a strong incentive to good-humour—a vent to good spirits; and being a weapon which every Irishman can wield in some fashion or other, establishes that sort of joust which prevailed in the mêlée tournaments, and where each tilted with whom he pleased.

Any one who has witnessed the progress of an Irish trial, even when the crime was of the very gravest, cannot fail to have been struck by the continual clash of smart remark and smarter

rejoinder between the Bench and the Bar; showing how men feel the necessity of ready-wittedness, and a promptitude to repel attack, in which even the prisoner in the dock takes his share, and cuts his joke at the most critical moment of his existence.

The Irish theatre always exhibits traits of this national taste; but a dinner-party, with its due infusion of barristers, is the best possible exemplification of this give and take, which, even if it had no higher merit, is a powerful ally of good-humour, and the sworn foe to everything like over-irritability or morbid self-esteem. Indeed, I could not wish a very conceited man, of a somewhat grave temperament and distant demeanour, a much heavier punishment than a course of Irish dinner-parties; for even though he should come out scatheless himself, the outrages to his sense of propriety, and the insults to his ideas of taste, would be a severe suffering.

That breakfast-table at Kilgobbin had some heavy hearts around the board. There was not, with the exception of Walpole, one there who had not, in the doubts that beset his future, grave cause for anxiety; and yet to look at, still more to listen to them, you would have said that Walpole alone had any load of care upon his heart, and that the others were a light-hearted, happy set of people, with whom the world went always well. No cloud! —not even a shadow to darken the road before them. Of this levity, for I suppose I must give it a hard name—the source of much that is best and worst amongst us—our English rulers take no account, and are often as ready to charge us with a conviction, which was no more than a caprice, as they are to nail us down to some determination, which was simply a drollery; and until some intelligent traveller does for us what I lately perceived a clever tourist did for the Japanese, in explaining their modes of thought, impulses, and passions to the English, I despair of our being better known in Downing Street than we now are.

Captain Curtis—for it is right to give him his rank—was fearfully nervous and uneasy, and though he tried to eat his breakfast with an air of unconcern and carelessness, he broke his egg with a tremulous hand, and listened with painful eagerness every time Walpole spoke.

'I wish somebody would send us the *Standard*; when it is known that the Lord-Lieutenant's secretary has turned Fenian,' said Kilgobbin, 'won't there be a grand Tory outcry over the unprincipled Whigs?'

'The papers need know nothing whatever of the incident,' interposed Curtis anxiously, 'if old Flood is not busy enough to inform them.'

'Who is old Flood?' asked Walpole.

'A Tory J.P., who has copied out a considerable share of your correspondence,' said Kilgobbin.

'And four letters in a lady's hand,' added Dick, 'that he imagines to be a treasonable correspondence by symbol.'

'I hope Mr. Walpole,' said Kate, 'will rather accept felony to the law than falsehood to the lady.'

'You don't mean to say——' began Walpole angrily; then correcting his irritable manner, he added, 'Am I to suppose my letters have been read?'

'Well, roughly looked through,' said Curtis. 'Just a glance here and there to catch what they meant.'

'Which I must say was quite unnecessary,' said Walpole haughtily.

'It was a sort of journal of yours,' blundered out Curtis, who had a most unhappy knack of committing himself, 'that they opened first, and they saw an entry with Kilgobbin Castle at the top of it, and the date last July.'

'There was nothing political in that, I 'm sure,' said Walpole.

'No, not exactly, but a trifle rebellious, all the same; the words, "We this evening learned a Fenian song, 'The time to begin,' and rather suspect it is time to leave off; the Greek better-looking than ever, and more dangerous."'

Curtis's last words were drowned in the laugh that now shook the table; indeed, except Walpole and Nina herself, they actually roared with laughter, which burst out afresh, as Curtis, in his innocence, said, 'We could not make out about the Greek, but we hoped we 'd find out later on.'

'And I fervently trust you did,' said Kilgobbin.

'I 'm afraid not; there was something about somebody called Joe, that the Greek wouldn't have him, or disliked him, or snubbed him—indeed, I forget the words.'

'You are quite right, sir, to distrust your memory,' said Walpole; 'it has betrayed you most egregiously already.'

'On the contrary,' burst in Kilgobbin, 'I am delighted with this proof of the captain's acuteness; tell us something more, Curtis.'

'There was then, "From the upper castle yard, Maude," whoever Maude is, "says, 'Deny it all, and say you never were there,' not so easy as she thinks, with a broken right arm, and a heart not quite so whole as it ought to be."'

'There, sir—with the permission of my friends here—I will ask you to conclude your reminiscences of my private papers, which can have no possible interest for any one but myself.'

'Quite wrong in that,' cried Kilgobbin, wiping his eyes, which

had run over with laughter. 'There 's nothing I 'd like so much as to hear more of them.'

'What was that about his heart?' whispered Curtis to Kate; 'was he wounded in the side also?'

'I believe so,' said she dryly; 'but I believe he has got quite over it by this time.'

'Will you say a word or two about me, Miss Kearney?' whispered he again; 'I 'm not sure I improved my case by talking so freely; but as I saw you all so outspoken, I thought I 'd fall into your ways.'

'Captain Curtis is much concerned for any fault he may have committed in this unhappy business,' said Kate, 'and he trusts that the agitation and excitement of the Donogan escape will excuse him.'

'That 's your policy now,' interposed Kilgobbin. 'Catch the Fenian fellow, and nobody will remember the other incident.'

'We mean to give out that we know he has got clear away to America,' said Curtis, with an air of intense cunning. 'And to lull his suspicions, we have notices in print to say that no further rewards are to be given for his apprehension; so that he 'll get a false confidence, and move about as before.'

'With such acuteness as yours on his trail, his arrest is certain,' said Walpole gravely.

'Well, I hope so, too,' said Curtis, in good faith for the compliment. 'Didn't I take up nine men for the search of arms here, though there were only five? One of them turned evidence,' added he gravely; 'he was the fellow that swore Miss Kearney stood between you and the fire after they wounded you.'

'You are determined to make Mr. Walpole your friend,' whispered Nina in his ear; 'don't you see, sir, that you are ruining yourself?'

'I have often been puzzled to explain how it was that crime went unpunished in Ireland,' said Walpole sententiously.

'And you know now?' asked Curtis.

'Yes; in a great measure, you have supplied me with the information.'

'I believe it 's all right now,' muttered the captain to Kate. 'If the swell owns that I have put him up to a thing or two, he 'll not throw me over.'

'Would you give me three minutes of your time?' whispered Gorman O'Shea to Lord Kilgobbin, as they arose from table.

'Half an hour, my boy, or more if you want it. Come along with me now into my study, and we 'll be safe there from all interruption.'

CHAPTER XLVI

SAGE ADVICE

'So then you're in a hobble with your aunt,' said Mr. Kearney, as he believed he had summed up the meaning of a very blundering explanation by Gorman O'Shea; 'isn't that it?'

'Yes, sir; I suppose it comes to that.'

'The old story, I've no doubt, if we only knew it—as old as the Patriarchs: the young ones go into debt, and think it very hard that the elders dislike the paying it.'

'No, no; I have no debts—at least, none to speak of.'

'It's a woman, then? Have you gone and married some good-looking girl, with no fortune and less family? Who is she?'

'Not even that, sir,' said he, half impatient at seeing how little attention had been bestowed on his narrative.

''Tis bad enough, no doubt,' continued the old man, still in pursuit of his own reflections; 'not but there's scores of things worse; for if a man is a good fellow at heart, he'll treat the woman all the better for what she has cost him. That is one of the good sides of selfishness; and when you have lived as long as me, Gorman, you'll find out how often there's something good to be squeezed out of a bad quality, just as though it were a bit of our nature that was depraved, but not gone to the devil entirely.'

'There is no woman in the case here, sir,' said O'Shea bluntly, for these speculations only irritated him.

'Ho, ho! I have it, then,' cried the old man. 'You've been burning your fingers with rebellion. It's the Fenians have got a hold of you.'

'Nothing of the kind, sir. If you'll just read these two letters. The one is mine, written on the morning I came here: here is my aunt's. The first is not word for word as I sent it, but as well as I can remember. At all events, it will show how little I had provoked the answer. There, that's the document that came along with my trunks, and I have never heard from her since.'

'"DEAR NEPHEW,"' read out the old man, after patiently adjusting his spectacles—'"O'Shea's Barn is not an inn,"—And more's the pity,' added he; 'for it would be a model house of entertainment. You'd say any one could have a sirloin of beef or a saddle of mutton; but where Miss Betty gets hers is quite beyond me. "Nor are the horses at public livery,"' read he out.

'I think I may say, if they were, that Kattoo won't be hired out again to the young man that took her over the fences. "As you seem fond of warnings,"' continued he, aloud—'Ho, ho! that's at *you* for coming over here to tell me about the search-warrant; and she tells you to mind your own business; and droll enough it is. We always fancy we're saying an impertinence to a man when we tell him to attend to what concerns him most. It shows, at least, that we think meddling a luxury. And then she adds, "Kilgobbin is welcome to you," and I can only say you are welcome to Kilgobbin—ay, and in her own words—"with such regularity and order as the meals succeed."—"All the luggage belonging to you," etc., and "I am, very respectfully, your Aunt." By my conscience, there was no need to sign it! That was old Miss Betty all the world over!' and he laughed till his eyes ran over, though the rueful face of young O'Shea was staring at him all the time. 'Don't look so gloomy, O'Shea,' cried Kearney: 'I have not so good a cook, nor, I'm sorry to say, so good a cellar, as at the Barn; but there are young faces, and young voices, and young laughter, and a light step on the stairs; and if I know anything, or rather, if I remember anything, these will warm a heart at your age better than '44 claret or the crustiest port that ever stained a decanter.'

'I am turned out, sir—sent adrift on the world,' said the young man despondently.

'And it is not so bad a thing after all, take my word for it, boy. It's a great advantage now and then to begin life as a vagabond. It takes a deal of snobbery out of a fellow to lie under a haystack, and there's no better cure for pretension than a dinner of cold potatoes. Not that I say you need the treatment—far from it—but our distinguished friend Mr. Walpole wouldn't be a bit the worse of such an alterative.'

'If I am left without a shilling in the world?'

'Then you must try what you can do on sixpence—the whole thing is how you begin. I used not to be able to eat my dinner when I did not see the fellow in a white tie standing before the sideboard, and the two flunkeys in plush and silk stockings at either side of the table; and when I perceived that the decanters had taken their departure, and that it was beer I was given to drink, I felt as if I had dined, and was ready to go out and have a smoke in the open air; but a little time, even without any patience, but just time, does it all.'

'Time won't teach a man to live upon nothing.'

'It would be very hard for him if it did; let him begin by having few wants, and work hard to supply means for them.'

'Work hard! why, sir, if I laboured from daylight to dark, I'd not earn the wages of the humblest peasant, and I'd not know how to live on it.'

'Well, I have given you all the philosophy in my budget, and to tell you the truth, Gorman, except so far as coming down in the world in spite of myself, I know mighty little about the fine precepts I have been giving you; but this I know, you have a roof over your head here, and you're heartily welcome to it; and who knows but your aunt may come to terms all the sooner, because she sees you here?'

'You are very generous to me, and I feel it deeply,' said the young man; but he was almost choked with the words.

'You have told me already, Gorman, that your aunt gave you no other reason against coming here than that I had not been to call on you; and I believe you—believe you thoroughly; but tell me now, with the same frankness, was there nothing passing in your mind—had you no suspicions or misgivings, or something of the same kind, to keep you away? Be candid with me now, and speak it out freely.'

'None, on my honour; I was sorely grieved to be told I must not come, and thought very often of rebelling, so that indeed, when I did rebel, I was in a measure prepared for the penalty, though scarcely so heavy as this.'

'Don't take it to heart. It will come right yet—everything comes right if we give it time—and there's plenty of time to the fellow who is not five-and-twenty. It's only the old dogs, like myself, who are always doing their match against time, are in a hobble. To feel that every minute of the clock is something very like three weeks of the almanac, flurries a man, when he wants to be cool and collected. Put your hat on a peg, and make your home here. If you want to be of use, Kitty will show you scores of things to do about the garden, and we never object to see a brace of snipe at the end of dinner, though there's nobody cares to shoot them; and the bog trout—for all their dark colour—are excellent catch, and I know you can throw a line. All I say is, do something, and something that takes you into the open air. Don't get to lying about in easy-chairs and reading novels; don't get to singing duets and philandering about with the girls. May I never, if I'd not rather find a brandy-flask in your pocket than Tennyson's poems!'

CHAPTER XLVII

REPROOF

'Say it out frankly, Kate,' cried Nina, as with flashing eyes and heightened colour she paced the drawing-room from end to end, with that bold sweeping stride which in moments of passion betrayed her. 'Say it out. I know perfectly what you are hinting at.'

'I never hint,' said the other gravely; 'least of all with those I love.'

'So much the better. I detest an equivoque. If I am to be shot, let me look the fire in the face.'

'There is no question of shooting at all. I think you are very angry for nothing.'

'Angry for nothing! Do you call that studied coldness you have observed towards me all day yesterday nothing? Is your ceremonious manner—exquisitely polite, I will not deny—is that nothing? Is your chilling salute when we met—I half believe you curtsied—nothing? That you shun me, that you take pains not to keep my company, never to be with me alone is past denial.'

'And I do not deny it,' said Kate, with a voice of calm and quiet meaning.

'At last, then, I have the avowal. You own that you love me no longer.'

'No, I own nothing of the kind: I love you very dearly; but I see that our ideas of life are so totally unlike, that unless one should bend and conform to the other, we cannot blend our thoughts in that harmony which perfect confidence requires. You are so much above me in many things, so much more cultivated and gifted—I was going to say civilised, and I believe I might——'

'Ta—ta—ta,' cried Nina impatiently. 'These flatteries are very ill-timed.'

'So they would be, if they were flatteries; but if you had patience to hear me out, you'd have learned that I meant a higher flattery for myself.'

'Don't I know it? don't I guess?' cried the Greek. 'Have not your downcast eyes told it? and that look of sweet humility that says, "At least I am not a flirt?"'

'Nor am I,' said Kate coldly.

'And I am! Come now, do confess. You want to say it.'

'With all my heart I wish you were not!' And Kate's eyes swam as she spoke.

'And what if I tell you that I know it—that in the very employment of the arts of what you call coquetry, I am but exercising those powers of pleasing by which men are led to frequent the salon instead of the café, and like the society of the cultivated and refined better than——'

'No, no, no!' burst in Kate. 'There is no such mock principle in the case. You are a flirt because you like the homage it secures you, and because, as you do not believe in such a thing as an honest affection, you have no scruple about trifling with a man's heart.'

'So much for captivating that bold hussar,' cried Nina.

'For the moment I was not thinking of him.'

'Of whom, then?'

'Of that poor Captain Curtis, who has just ridden away.'

'Oh, indeed!'

'Yes. He has a pretty wife and three nice little girls, and they are the happiest people in the world. They love each other, and love their home—so, at least, I am told, for I scarcely know them myself.'

'And what have I done with *him*?'

'Sent him away sad and doubtful—very doubtful if the happiness he believed in was the real article after all, and disposed to ask himself how it was that his heart was beating in a new fashion, and that some new sense had been added to his nature, of which he had no inkling before. Sent him away with the notes of a melody floating through his brain, so that the merry laugh of his children will be a discord, and such a memory of a soft glance, that his wife's bright look will be meaningless.'

'And I have done all this? Poor me!'

'Yes, and done it so often, that it leaves no remorse behind it.'

'And the same, I suppose, with the others?'

'With Mr. Walpole, and Dick, and Mr. O'Shea, and Mr. Atlee too, when he was here, in their several ways.'

'Oh, in theirs, not in mine, then?'

'I am but a bungler in my explanation. I wished to say that you adapted your fascinations to the tastes of each.'

'What a siren!'

'Well, yes—what a siren; for they're all in love in some fashion or other; but I could have forgiven you these, had you spared the married man.'

'So you actually envy that poor prisoner the gleam of light and

the breath of cold air that comes between his prison bars—that one moment of ecstasy that reminds him how he once was free and at large, and no manacles to weigh him down? You will not let him even touch bliss in imagination? Are *you* not more cruel than *me*?'

'This is mere nonsense,' said Kate boldly. 'You either believe that man was fooling *you*, or that you have sent him away unhappy? Take which of these you like.'

'Can't your rustic nature see that there is a third case, quite different from both, and that Harry Curtis went off believing——'

'Was he Harry Curtis?' broke in Kate.

'He was dear Harry when I said good-bye,' said Nina calmly.

'Oh, then, I give up everything—I throw up my brief.'

'So you ought, for you have lost your cause long ago.'

'Even that poor Donogan was not spared, and Heaven knows he had troubles enough on his head to have pleaded some pity for him.'

'And is there no kind word to say of *me*, Kate?'

'O Nina, how ashamed you make me of my violence, when I dare to blame you! but if I did not love you so dearly, I could better bear you should have a fault.'

'I have only one, then?'

'I know of no great one but this. I mean, I know of none that endangers good-nature and right feeling.'

'And are you so sure that this does? Are you so sure that what you are faulting is not the manner and the way of a world you have not seen? that all these levities, as you would call them, are not the ordinary wear of people whose lives are passed where there is more tolerance and less pain?'

'Be serious, Nina, for a moment, and own that it was by intention you were in the approach when Captain Curtis rode away: that you said something to him, or looked something—perhaps both—on which he got down from his horse and walked beside you for full a mile?'

'All true,' said Nina calmly. 'I confess to every part of it.'

'I'd far rather that you said you were sorry for it.'

'But I am not; I'm very glad—I'm very proud of it. Yes, look as reproachfully as you like, Kate! "very proud" was what I said.'

'Then I am indeed sorry,' said Kate, growing pale as she spoke.

'I don't think, after all this sharp lecturing of me, that you deserve much of my confidence, and if I make you any, Kate, it is not by way of exculpation; for I do not accept your blame; it

is simply out of caprice—mind that, and that I am not thinking of defending myself.'

'I can easily believe that,' said Kate dryly.

And the other continued: 'When Captain Curtis was talking to your father, and discussing the chances of capturing Donogan, he twice or thrice mentioned Harper and Fry—names which somehow seemed familiar to me; and on thinking the matter over when I went to my room, I opened Donogan's pocket-book and there found how these names had become known to me. Harper and Fry were tanners, in Cork Street, and theirs was one of the addresses by which, if I had occasion to warn Donogan, I could write to him. On hearing these names from Curtis, it struck me that there might be treachery somewhere. Was it that these men themselves had turned traitors to the cause? or had another betrayed them? Whichever way the matter went, Donogan was evidently in great danger; for this was one of the places he regarded as perfectly safe.

'What was to be done? I dared not ask advice on any side. To reveal the suspicions which were tormenting me required that I should produce this pocket-book, and to whom could I impart this man's secret? I thought of your brother Dick, but he was from home, and even if he had not been, I doubt if I should have told him. I should have come to you, Kate, but that grand rebukeful tone you had taken up this last twenty-four hours repelled me; and finally, I took counsel with myself. I set off just before Captain Curtis started, to what you have called waylay him in the avenue.

'Just below the beech-copse he came up; and then that small flirtation of the drawing-room, which has caused you so much anger and me such a sharp lesson, stood me in good stead, and enabled me to arrest his progress by some chance word or two, and at last so far to interest him that he got down and walked along at my side. I shall not shock you by recalling the little tender "nothings" that passed between us, nor dwell on the small mockeries of sentiment which we exchanged—I hope very harmlessly—but proceed at once to what I felt my object. He was profuse of his gratitude for what I had done for him with Walpole, and firmly believed that my intercession alone had saved him; and so I went on to say that the best reparation he could make for his blunder would be some exercise of well-directed activity when occasion should offer. "Suppose, for instance," said I, "you could capture this man Donogan?"

'"The very thing I hope to do," cried he. "The train is laid already. One of my constables has a brother in a well-known

house in Dublin, the members of which, men of large wealth and good position, have long been suspected of holding intercourse with the rebels. Through his brother, himself a Fenian, this man has heard that a secret committee will meet at this place on Monday evening next, at which Donogan will be present. Molloy, another head-centre, will also be there, and Cummings, who escaped from Carrickfergus." I took down all the names, Kate, the moment we parted, and while they were fresh in my memory. "We 'll draw the net on them all," said he; "and such a haul has not been made since '98. The rewards alone will amount to some thousands." It was then I said, "And is there no danger, Harry?"'

'O Nina!'

'Yes, darling, it was very dreadful, and I felt it so; but somehow one is carried away by a burst of feeling at certain moments, and the shame only comes too late. Of course it was wrong of me to call him Harry, and he, too, with a wife at home, and five little girls—or three, I forget which—should never have sworn that he loved me, nor said all that mad nonsense about what he felt in that region where chief constables have their hearts; but I own to great tenderness and a very touching sensibility on either side. Indeed, I may add here, that the really sensitive natures amongst men are never found under forty-five; but for genuine, uncalculating affection, for the sort of devotion that flings consequences to the winds, I say, give me fifty-eight or sixty.'

'Nina, do not make me hate you,' said Kate gravely.

'Certainly not, dearest, if a little hypocrisy will avert such a misfortune. And so to return to my narrative, I learned, as accurately as a gentleman so much in love could condescend to inform me, of all the steps taken to secure Donogan at this meeting, or to capture him later on if he should try to make his escape by sea.'

'You mean, then, to write to Donogan and apprise him of his danger?'

'It is done. I wrote the moment I got back here. I addressed him as Mr. James Bredin, care of Jonas Mullory, Esq., 41 New Street, which was the first address in the list he gave me. I told him of the peril he ran, and what his friends were also threatened by, and I recounted the absurd seizure of Mr. Walpole's effects here; and, last of all, what a dangerous rival he had in this Captain Curtis, who was ready to desert wife, children, and the constabulary to-morrow for me; and assuring him confidentially that I was well worth greater sacrifices of better men, I signed my initials in Greek letters.'

'Marvellous caution and great discretion,' said Kate solemnly.

'And now come over to the drawing-room, where I have promised to sing for Mr. O'Shea some little ballad that he dreamed over all the night through; and then there's something else—what is it? what is it?'

'How should I know, Nina? I was not present at your arrangement.'

'Never mind; I'll remember it presently. It will come to my recollection while I'm singing that song.'

'If emotion is not too much for you.'

'Just so, Kate—sensibilities permitting; and, indeed,' she said, 'I remember it already. It was luncheon.'

CHAPTER XLVIII

HOW MEN IN OFFICE MAKE LOVE

'Is it true they have captured Donogan?' said Nina, coming hurriedly into the library, where Walpole was busily engaged with his correspondence, and sat before a table covered not only with official documents, but a number of printed placards and handbills.

He looked up, surprised at her presence, and by the tone of familiarity in her question, for which he was in no way prepared, and for a second or two actually stared at without answering her.

'Can't you tell me? Are they correct in saying he has been caught?' cried she impatiently.

'Very far from it. There are the police returns up to last night from Meath, Kildare, and Dublin; and though he was seen at Naas, passed some hours in Dublin, and actually attended a night meeting at Kells, all trace of him has been since lost, and he has completely baffled us. By the Viceroy's orders, I am now doubling the reward for his apprehension, and am prepared to offer a free pardon to any who shall give information about him, who may not actually have committed a felony.'

'Is he so very dangerous, then?'

'Every man who is so daring is dangerous here. The people have a sort of idolatry for reckless courage. It is not only that he has ventured to come back to the country where his life is sacrificed to the law, but he declares openly he is ready to offer himself as a representative for an Irish county, and to test in his own person whether the English will have the temerity to touch the man—the choice of the Irish people.'

'He *is* bold,' said she resolutely.

'And I trust he will pay for his boldness! Our law-officers are prepared to treat him as a felon, irrespective of all claim to his character as a Member of Parliament.'

'The danger will not deter him.'

'You think so?'

'I know it,' was the calm reply.

'Indeed,' said he, bending a steady look at her. 'What opportunities, might I ask, have you had to form this same opinion?'

'Are not the public papers full of him? Have we not an almost daily record of his exploits? Do not your own rewards for his capture impart an almost fabulous value to his life?'

'His portrait, too, may lend some interest to his story,' said he, with a half-sneering smile. 'They say this is very like him.' And he handed a photograph as he spoke.

'This was done in New York,' said she, turning to the back of the card, the better to hide an emotion she could not entirely repress.

'Yes, done by a brother Fenian, long since in our pay.'

'How base all that sounds! how I detest such treachery!'

'How deal with treason without it. Is it like him?' asked he artlessly.

'How should I know?' said she, in a slightly hurried tone. 'It is not like the portrait in the *Illustrated News*.'

'I wonder which is the more like,' added he thoughtfully, 'and I fervently hope we shall soon know. There is not a man he confides in who has not engaged to betray him.'

'I trust you feel proud of your achievement.'

'No, not proud, but very anxious for its success. The perils of this country are too great for mere sensibilities. He who would extirpate a terrible disease must not fear the knife.'

'Not if he even kill the patient?' asked she.

'That might happen, and would be to be deplored,' said he, in the same unmoved tone. 'But might I ask, whence has come all this interest for this cause, and how have you learned so much sympathy with these people?'

'I read the newspapers,' said she dryly.

'You must read those of only one colour, then,' said he slyly; 'or perhaps it is the tone of comment you hear about you. Are your sentiments such as you daily listen to from Lord Kilgobbin and his family?'

'I don't know that they are. I suspect I'm more of a rebel than he is; but I'll ask him if you wish it.'

'On no account, I entreat you. It would compromise me seriously to hear such a discussion even in jest. Remember who I am, mademoiselle, and the office I hold.'

'Your great frankness, Mr. Walpole, makes me sometimes forget both,' said she, with well-acted humility.

'I wish it would do something more,' said he eagerly. 'I wish it would inspire a little emulation, and make you deal as openly with *me* as I long to do with *you*.'

'It might embarrass you very much, perhaps.'

'As how?' asked he, with a touch of tenderness in his voice.

For a second or two she made no answer, and then, faltering at each word, she said, 'What if some rebel leader—this man Donogan, for instance—drawn towards you by some secret magic of trustfulness, moved by I know not what need of your sympathy—for there is such a craving void now and then felt in the heart—should tell you some secret thought of his nature—something that he could utter alone to himself—would you bring yourself to use it against him? Could you turn round and say, "I have your inmost soul in my keeping. You are mine now—mine—mine?"'

'Do I understand you aright?' said he earnestly. 'Is it just possible, even possible, that you have that to confide to me which would show that you regard me as a dear friend?'

'Oh! Mr. Walpole,' burst she out passionately, 'do not by the greater power of *your* intellect seek the mastery over *mine*. Let the loneliness and isolation of my life here rather appeal to you to pity than suggest the thought of influencing and dominating me.'

'Would that I might. What would I not give or do to have that power that you speak of.'

'Is this true?' said she.

'It is.'

'Will you swear it?'

'Most solemnly.'

She paused for a moment, and a slight tremor shook her mouth; but whether the motion expressed a sentiment of acute pain or a movement of repressed sarcasm, it was very difficult to determine.

'What is it, then, that you would swear?' asked she calmly and even coldly.

'Swear that I have no hope so high, no ambition so great, as to win your heart.'

'Indeed! And that other heart that you have won—what is to become of it?'

'Its owner has recalled it. In fact, it was never in *my* keeping but as a loan.'

'How strange! At least, how strange to me this sounds. I, in my ignorance, thought that people pledged their very lives in these bargains.'

'So it ought to be, and so it would be, if this world were not a web of petty interests and mean ambitions; and these, I grieve to say, will find their way into hearts that should be the home of very different sentiments. It was of this order was that compact with my cousin—for I will speak openly to you, knowing it is her to whom you allude. We were to have been married. It was an old engagement. Our friends—that is, I believe, the way to call them—liked it. They thought it a good thing for each of us. Indeed, making the dependants of a good family intermarry is an economy of patronage—the same plank rescues two from drowning. I believe—that is, I fear—we accepted all this in the same spirit. We were to love each other as much as we could, and our relations were to do their best for us.'

'And now it is all over?'

'All—and for ever.'

'How came this about?'

'At first by a jealousy about *you*.'

'A jealousy about *me*! You surely never dared——' and here her voice trembled with real passion, while her eyes flashed angrily.

'No, no. I am guiltless in the matter. It was that cur Atlee made the mischief. In a moment of weak trustfulness, I sent him over to Wales to assist my uncle in his correspondence. He, of course, got to know Lady Maude Bickerstaffe—by what arts he ingratiated himself into her confidence, I cannot say. Indeed, I had trusted that the fellow's vulgarity would form an impassable barrier between them, and prevent all intimacy; but, apparently, I was wrong. He seems to have been the companion of her rides and drives, and under the pretext of doing some commissions for her in the bazaars of Constantinople, he got to correspond with her. So artful a fellow would well know what to make of such a privilege.'

'And is he your successor now?' asked she, with a look of almost undisguised insolence.

'Scarcely that,' said he, with a supercilious smile. 'I think, if you had ever seen my cousin, you would scarcely have asked the question.'

'But I have seen her. I saw her at the Odescalchi Palace at Rome. I remember the stare she was pleased to bestow on me

as she swept past me. I remember more, her words as she asked, "Is this your Titian Girl I have heard so much of?"'

'And may hear more of,' muttered he, almost unconsciously.

'Yes—even that too; but not, perhaps, in the sense you mean.' Then, as if correcting herself, she went on, 'It was a bold ambition of Mr. Atlee. I must say I like the very daring of it.'

'*He* never dared it—take my word for it.'

An insolent laugh was her first reply. 'How little you men know of each other, and how less than little you know of us! You sneer at the people who are moved by sudden impulse, but you forget it is the squall upsets the boat.'

'I believe I can follow what you mean. You would imply that my cousin's breach with *me* might have impelled her to listen to Atlee?'

'Not so much that as, by establishing himself as her confidant, he got the key of her heart, and let himself in as he pleased.'

'I suspect he found little to interest him there.'

'The insufferable insolence of that speech! Can you men never be brought to see that we are not all alike to each of you; that our natures have their separate watchwords, and that the soul which would vibrate with tenderness to this, is to that a dead and senseless thing, with no trace or touch of feeling about it?'

'I only believe this in part.'

'Believe it wholly, then, or own that you know nothing of love—no more than do those countless thousands who go through life and never taste its real ecstasy, nor its real sorrow; who accept convenience, or caprice, or flattered vanity as its counterfeit, and live out the delusion in lives of discontent. You have done wrong to break with your cousin. It is clear to me you suited each other.'

'This is sarcasm.'

'If it is, I am sorry for it. I meant it for sincerity. In *your* career, ambition is everything. The woman that could aid you on your road would be the real helpmate. She who would simply cross your path by her sympathies, or her affections, would be a mere embarrassment. Take the very case before us. Would not Lady Maude point out to you how, by the capture of this rebel, you might so aid your friends as to establish a claim for recompense? Would she not impress you with the necessity of showing how your activity redounded to the credit of your party? She would neither interpose with ill-timed appeals to your pity or a misplaced sympathy. *She* would help the politician, while another might hamper the man.'

'All that might be true, if the game of political life were played as it seems to be on the surface, and my cousin was exactly the sort of woman to use ordinary faculties with ability and acuteness; but there are scores of things in which her interference would have been hurtful, and her secrecy dubious. I will give you an instance, and it will serve to show my implicit confidence in yourself. Now with respect to this man, Donogan, there is nothing we wish less than to take him. To capture means to try —to try means to hang him—and how much better, or safer, or stronger are we when it is done? These fellows, right or wrong, represent opinions that are never controverted by the scaffold, and every man who dies for his convictions leaves a thousand disciples who never believed in him before. It is only because he braves us that we pursue him, and in the face of our opponents and Parliament we cannot do less. So that while we are offering large rewards for his apprehension, we would willingly give double the sum to know he had escaped. Talk of the supremacy of the Law—the more you assert that here, the more ungovernable is this country by a Party. An active Attorney-General is another word for three more regiments in Ireland.'

'I follow you with some difficulty; but I see that you would like this man to get away, and how is that to be done?'

'Easily enough, when once he knows that it will be safe for him to go north. He naturally fears the Orangemen of the northern counties. They will, however, do nothing without the police, and the police have got their orders throughout Antrim and Derry. Here—on this strip of paper—here are the secret instructions:—"To George Dargan, Chief Constable, Letterkenny District. Private and confidential.—It is, for many reasons, expedient that the convict Donogan, on a proper understanding that he will not return to Ireland, should be suffered to escape. If you are, therefore, in a position to extort a pledge from him to this extent—and it should be explicit and beyond all cavil—you will, taking due care not to compromise your authority in your office, aid him to leave the country, even to the extent of moneyed assistance." To this are appended directions how he is to proceed to carry out these instructions: what he may, and what he may not do, with whom he may seek for co-operation, and where he is to maintain a guarded and careful secrecy. Now, in telling you all this, Mademoiselle Kostalergi, I have given you the strongest assurance in my power of the unlimited trust I have in you. I see how the questions that agitate this country interest you. I read the eagerness with which you watch them, but I want you to see more. I want you to see that the men

who purpose to themselves the great task of extricating Ireland from her difficulties must be politicians in the highest sense of the word, and that you should see in us statesmen of an order that can weigh human passions and human emotions—and see that hope and fear, and terror and gratitude, sway the hearts of men who, to less observant eyes, seem to have no place in their natures but for rebellion. That this mode of governing Ireland is the one charm to the Celtic heart, all the Tory rule of the last fifty years, with its hangings and banishments and other terrible blunders, will soon convince you. The Priest alone has felt the pulse of this people, and we are the only Ministers of England who have taken the Priest into our confidence. I own to you I claim some credit for myself in this discovery. It was in long reflecting over the ills of Ireland that I came to see that where the malady has so much in its nature that is sensational and emotional, so must the remedy be sensational too. The Tories were ever bent on extirpating—*we* devote ourselves to "healing measures." Do you follow me?'

'I do,' said she thoughtfully.

'Do I interest you?' asked he, more tenderly.

'Intensely,' was the reply.

'Oh, if I could but think *that*! If I could bring myself to believe that the day would come, not only to secure your interest, but your aid and your assistance in this great task! I have long sought the opportunity to tell you that we, who hold the destinies of a people in our keeping, are not inferior to our great trust, that we are not mere creatures of a state department, small deities of the Olympus of office, but actual statesmen and rulers. Fortune has given me the wished-for moment, let it complete my happiness, let it tell me that you see in this noble work one worthy of your genius and your generosity, and that you would accept me as a fellow-labourer in the cause.'

The fervour which he threw into the utterance of these words contrasted strongly and strangely with the words themselves; so unlike the declaration of a lover's passion.

'I do—not—know,' said she falteringly.

'What is that you do not know?' asked he, with tender eagerness.

'I do not know if I understand you aright, and I do not know what answer I should give you.'

'Will not your heart tell you?'

She shook her head.

'You will not crush me with the thought that there is no pleading for me there.'

'If you had desired in honesty my regard, you should not have prejudiced me: you began here by enlisting my sympathies in your Task; you told me of your ambitions. I like these ambitions.'

'Why not share them?' cried he passionately.

'You seem to forget what you ask. A woman does not give her heart as a man joins a party or an administration. It is no question of an advantage based upon a compromise. There is no sentiment of gratitude, or recompense, or reward in the gift. She simply gives that which is no longer hers to retain! She trusts to what her mind will not stop to question—she goes where she cannot help but follow.'

'How immeasurably greater your every word makes the prize of your love.'

'It is in no vanity that I say I know it,' said she calmly. 'Let us speak no more on this now.'

'But you will not refuse to listen to me, Nina?'

'I will read you if you write to me,' and with a wave of good-bye she slowly left the room.

'She is my master, even at my own game,' said Walpole, as he sat down, and rested his head between his hands. 'Still she is mistaken: I can write just as vaguely as I can speak, and if I could not, it would have cost me my freedom this many a day. With such a woman one might venture high, but Heaven help him when he ceased to climb the mountain!'

CHAPTER XLIX

A CUP OF TEA

It was so rare an event of late for Nina to seek her cousin in her own room, that Kate was somewhat surprised to see Nina enter with all her old ease of manner, and flinging away her hat carelessly, say, 'Let me have a cup of tea, dearest, for I want to have a clear head and a calm mind for at least the next half-hour.'

'It is almost time to dress for dinner, especially for you, Nina, who make a careful toilet.'

'Perhaps I shall make less to-day, perhaps not go down to dinner at all. Do you know, child, I have every reason for agitation, and maiden bashfulness besides? Do you know I have had a proposal—a proposal in all form—from—but you shall guess whom.'

'Mr. O'Shea, of course.'

'No, not Mr. O'Shea, though I am almost prepared for such a step on his part—nor from your brother Dick, who has been falling in and out of love with me for the last three months or more. My present conquest is the supremely arrogant, but now condescending, Mr. Walpole, who, for reasons of state and exigencies of party, has been led to believe that a pretty wife, with a certain amount of natural astuteness, might advance his interests, and tend to his promotion in public life; and with his old instincts as a gambler, he is actually ready to risk his fortunes on a single card, and I, the portionless Greek girl, with about the same advantages of family as of fortune—I am to be that queen of trumps on which he stands to win. And now, darling, the cup of tea, the cup of tea, if you want to hear more.'

While Kate was busy arranging the cups of a little tea-service that did duty in her dressing-room, Nina walked impatiently to and fro, talking with rapidity all the time.

'The man is a greater fool than I thought him, and mistakes his native weakness of mind for originality. If you had heard the imbecile nonsense he talked to me for political shrewdness, and when he had shown me what a very poor creature he was, he made me the offer of himself! This was so far honest and above-board. It was saying in so many words, "You see, I am a bankrupt." Now, I don't like bankrupts, either of mind or money. Could he not have seen that he who seeks my favour must sue in another fashion?'

'And so you refused him?' said Kate, as she poured out her tea.

'Far from it—I rather listened to his suit. I was so far curious to hear what he could plead in his behalf, that I bade him write it. Yes, dearest; it was a maxim of that very acute man my papa, that when a person makes you any dubious proposition in words, you oblige him to commit it to writing. Not necessarily to be used against him afterwards, but for this reason—and I can almost quote my papa's phrase on the occasion—in the homage of his self-love, a man will rarely write himself such a knave as he will dare to own when he is talking, and in that act of weakness is the gain of the other party to the compact.'

'I don't think I understand you.'

'I'm sure you do not; and you have put no sugar in my tea, which is worse. Do you mean to say that your clock is right, and that it is already nigh seven? Oh dear! and I, who have not told you one-half of my news, I must go and dress. I have a certain green silk with white roses which I mean to wear, and

with my hair in that crimson Neapolitan net, it is a toilet *à la* minute.'

'You know how it becomes you,' said Kate, half slyly.

'Of course I do, or in this critical moment of my life I should not risk it. It will have its own suggestive meaning too. It will recall *ce cher* Cecil to days at Baia, or wandering along the coast at Portici. I have known a fragment of lace, a flower, a few bars of a song, do more to link the broken chain of memory than scores of more laboured recollections; and then these little paths that lead you back are so simple, so free from all premeditation. Don't you think so, dear?'

'I do not know, and if it were not rude, I'd say I do not care.'

'If my cup of tea were not so good, I should be offended, and leave the room after such a speech. But you do not know, you could not guess, the interesting things that I could tell you,' cried she, with an almost breathless rapidity. 'Just imagine that deep statesman, that profound plotter, telling me that they actually did not wish to capture Donogan—that they would rather that he should escape!'

'He told you this?'

'He did more: he showed me the secret instructions to his police creatures—I forget how they are called—showing what they might do to connive at his escape, and how they should—if they could—induce him to give some written pledge to leave Ireland for ever.'

'Oh, this is impossible!' cried Kate.

'I could prove it to you, if I had not just sent off the veritable bit of writing by post. Yes, stare and look horrified if you like; it is all true. I stole the piece of paper with the secret directions, and sent it straight to Donogan, under cover to Archibald Casey, Esq., 9 Lower Gardner Street, Dublin.'

'How could you have done such a thing?'

'Say, how could I have done otherwise. Donogan now knows whether it will become him to sign this pact with the enemy. If he deem his life worth having at the price, it is well that *I* should know it.'

'It is then of yourself you were thinking all the while.'

'Of myself and of him. I do not say I love this man; but I do say his conduct now shall decide if he be worth loving. There's the bell for dinner. You shall hear all I have to say this evening. What an interest it gives to life, even this much of plot and peril! Short of being with the rebel himself, Kate, and sharing his dangers, I know of nothing could have given me such delight.'

She turned back as she left the door, and said, 'Make Mr.

Walpole take you down to dinner to-day; I shall take Mr. O'Shea's arm, or your brother's.'

The address of Archibald Casey, which Nina had used on this occasion, was that of a well-known solicitor in Dublin, whose Conservative opinions placed him above all suspicion or distrust. One of his clients, however—a certain Mr. Maher—had been permitted to have letters occasionally addressed to him to Casey's care; and Maher, being an old college friend of Donogan's, afforded him this mode of receiving letters in times of unusual urgency or danger. Maher shared very slightly in Donogan's opinions. He thought the men of the National party not only dangerous in themselves, but that they afforded a reason for many of the repressive laws which Englishmen passed with reference to Ireland. A friendship of early life, when both these young men were college students, had overcome such scruples, and Donogan had been permitted to have many letters marked simply with a D., which were sent under cover to Maher. This facility had, however, been granted so far back as '47, and had not been renewed in the interval, during which time the Archibald Casey of that period had died, and been succeeded by a son with the same name as his father.

When Nina, on looking over Donogan's note-book, came upon this address, she saw also some almost illegible words, which implied that it was only to be employed as the last resort, or had been so used—a phrase she could not exactly determine what it meant. The present occasion—so emergent in every way—appeared to warrant both haste and security; and so, under cover to S. Maher, she wrote to Donogan in these words:—

'I send you the words, in the original handwriting, of the instructions with regard to you. You will do what your honour and your conscience dictate. Do not write to me; the public papers will inform me what your decision has been, and I shall be satisfied, however it incline. I rely upon you to burn the inclosure.'

A suit-at-law, in which Casey acted as Maher's attorney at this period, required that the letters addressed to his house for Maher should be opened and read; and though the letter D. on the outside might have suggested a caution, Casey either overlooked or misunderstood it, and broke the seal. Not knowing what to think of this document, which was without signature, and had no clue to the writer except the postmark of Kilgobbin, Casey hastened to lay the letter as it stood before the barrister who conducted Maher's cause, and to ask his advice. The Right Hon. Paul Hartigan was an ex-Attorney-General of the Tory party—a zealous, active, but somewhat rash member of his party: still

in the House, a member for Mallow, and far more eager for the return of his friends to power than the great man who dictated the tactics of the Opposition, and who with more of responsibility could calculate the chances of success.

Paul Hartigan's estimate of the Whigs was such that it would have in nowise astonished him to discover that Mr. Gladstone was in close correspondence with O'Donovan Rossa, or that Chichester Fortescue had been sworn in as a head-centre. That the whole Cabinet were secretly Papists, and held weekly confession at the feet of Dr. Manning, he was prepared to prove. He did not vouch for Mr. Lowe; but he could produce the form of scapular worn by Mr. Gladstone, and had a facsimile of the scourge by which Mr. Cardwell diurnally chastened his natural instincts.

If, then, he expressed but small astonishment at this 'traffic of the Government with rebellion,' for so he called it—he lost no time in endeavouring to trace the writer of the letter, and ascertaining, so far as he might, the authenticity of the inclosure.

'It 's all true, Casey,' said he, a few days after his receipt of the papers. 'The instructions are written by Cecil Walpole, the private secretary of Lord Danesbury. I have obtained several specimens of his writing. There is no attempt at disguise or concealment in this. I have learned, too, that the police-constable Dargan is one of their most trusted agents; and the only thing now to find out is, who is the writer of the letter, for up to this all we know is, the hand is a woman's.'

Now it chanced that when Mr. Hartigan—who had taken great pains and bestowed much time to learn the story of the night attack on Kilgobbin, and wished to make the presence of Mr. Walpole on the scene the ground of a question in Parliament—had consulted the leader of the Opposition on the subject, he had met not only a distinct refusal of aid, but something very like a reproof for his ill-advised zeal. The Honourable Paul, not for the first time disposed to distrust the political loyalty that differed with his own ideas, now declared openly that he would not confide this great disclosure to the lukewarm advocacy of Mr. Disraeli; he would himself lay it before the House, and stand or fall by the result.

If the men who 'stand or fall' by any measure were counted, it is to be feared that they usually would be found not only in the category of the latter, but that they very rarely rise again, so very few are the matters which can be determined without some compromise, and so rare are the political questions which comprehend a distinct principle.

What warmed the Hartigan ardour, and, indeed, chafed it to a white heat on this occasion, was to see by the public papers that Daniel Donogan had been fixed on by the men of King's County as the popular candidate, and a public meeting held at Kilbeggan to declare that the man who should oppose him at the hustings should be pronounced the enemy of Ireland. To show that while this man was advertised in the *Hue and Cry*, with an immense reward for his apprehension, he was in secret protected by the Government, who actually condescended to treat with him ; what an occasion would this afford for an attack that would revive the memories of Grattan's scorn and Curran's sarcasm, and declare to the senate of England that the men who led them were unworthy guardians of the national honour !

CHAPTER L

CROSS-PURPOSES

Whether Walpole found some peculiar difficulty in committing his intentions to writing, or whether the press of business which usually occupied his mornings served as an excuse, or whether he was satisfied with the progress of his suit by his personal assiduities, is not easy to say ; but his attentions to Mademoiselle Kostalergi had now assumed the form which prudent mothers are wont to call ' serious,' and had already passed into that stage where small jealousies begin, and little episodes of anger and discontent are admitted as symptoms of the complaint.

In fact, he had got to think himself privileged to remonstrate against this, and to dictate that—a state, be it observed, which, whatever its effect upon the ' lady of his love,' makes a man particularly odious to the people around him, and he is singularly fortunate if it make him not ridiculous also.

The docile or submissive was not the remarkable element in Nina's nature. She usually resisted advice, and resented anything like dictation from any quarter. Indeed, they who knew her best saw that, however open to casual influences, a direct show of guidance was sure to call up all her spirit of opposition. It was, then, a matter of actual astonishment to all to perceive not only how quietly and patiently she accepted Walpole's comments and suggestions, but how implicitly she seemed to obey them.

All the little harmless freedoms of manner with Dick Kearney and O'Shea were now completely given up. No more was there between them that interchange of light persiflage which, pre-

supposing some subject of common interest, is in itself a ground of intimacy.

She ceased to sing the songs that were their favourites. Her walks in the garden after breakfast, where her ready wit and genial pleasantry used to bring her a perfect troop of followers, were abandoned. The little projects of daily pleasure, hitherto her especial province, were changed for a calm subdued demeanour which, though devoid of all depression, wore the impress of a certain thoughtfulness and seriousness.

No man was less observant than old Kearney, and yet even he saw the change at last, and asked Kate what it might mean. 'She is not ill, I hope,' said he, 'or is our humdrum life too wearisome to her?

'I do not suspect either,' said Kate slowly. 'I rather believe that as Mr. Walpole has paid her certain attentions, she has made the changes in her manner in deference to some wishes of his.'

'He wants her to be more English, perhaps,' said he sarcastically.

'Perhaps so.'

'Well, she is not born one of us, but she is like us all the same, and I'll be sorely grieved if she'll give up her light-heartedness and her pleasantry to win that Cockney.'

'I think she has won the Cockney already, sir.'

A long, low whistle was the reply. At last he said, 'I suppose it's a very grand conquest, and what the world calls "an elegant match"; but may I never see Easter, if I wouldn't rather she'd marry a fine dashing young fellow over six feet high, like O'Shea there, than one of your gold-chain-and-locket young gentlemen who smile where they ought to laugh, and pick their way through life as a man crosses a stream on stepping-stones.'

'Maybe she does not like Mr. O'Shea, sir.'

'And do you think she likes the other man? or is it anything else than one of those mercenary attachments that you young ladies understand better, far better, than the most worldly-minded father or mother of us all?'

'Mr. Walpole has not, I believe, any fortune, sir. There is nothing very dazzling in his position or his prospects.'

'No. Not amongst his own set, nor with his own people—he is small enough there, I grant you; but when he comes down to ours, Kitty, we think him a grandee of Spain; and if he was married into the family, we'd get off all his noble relations by heart, and soon start talking of our aunt, Lady Such-a-one, and Lord Somebody else, that was our first-cousin, till our neighbours would nearly die out of pure spite. Sitting down in one's poverty, and thinking over one's grand relations, is for all the world like

Paddy eating his potatoes, and pointing at the red-herring—even the look of what he dare not taste flavours his meal.'

'At least, sir, you have found an excuse for our conduct.'

'Because we are all snobs, Kitty; because there is not a bit of honesty or manliness in our nature; and because our women, that need not be bargaining or borrowing—neither pawnbrokers nor usurers—are just as vulgar-minded as ourselves; and now that we have given twenty millions to get rid of slavery, like to show how they can keep it up in the old country, just out of defiance.'

'If you disapprove of Mr. Walpole, sir, I believe it is full time you should say so.'

'I neither approve nor disapprove of him. I don't well know whether I have any right to do either—I mean so far as to influence her choice. He belongs to a sort of men I know as little about as I do of the Choctaw Indians. They have lives and notions and ways all unlike ours. The world is so civil to them that it prepares everything to their taste. If they want to shoot, the birds are cooped up in a cover, and only let fly when they're ready. When they fish, the salmon are kept prepared to be caught; and if they make love, the young lady is just as ready to rise to the fly, and as willing to be bagged as either. Thank God, my darling, with all our barbarism, we have not come to that in Ireland.'

'Here comes Mr. Walpole now, sir; and if I read his face aright, he has something of importance to say to you.'

Kate had barely time to leave the room as Walpole came forward with an open telegram and a mass of papers in his hand.

'May I have a few moments of conversation with you?' said he; and in the tone of his words, and a certain gravity in his manner, Kearney thought he could perceive what the communication portended.

'I am at your orders,' said Kearney, and he placed a chair for the other.

'An incident has befallen my life here, Mr. Kearney, which, I grieve to say, may not only colour the whole of my future career, but not impossibly prove the barrier to my pursuit of public life.'

Kearney stared at him as he finished speaking, and the two men sat fixedly gazing on each other.

'It is, I hasten to own, the one unpleasant, the one, the only one, disastrous event of a visit full of the happiest memories of my life. Of your generous and graceful hospitality, I cannot say half what I desire——'

'Say nothing about my hospitality,' said Kearney, whose

irritation as to what the other called a disaster left him no place for any other sentiment: 'but just tell me why you count this a misfortune.'

'I call a misfortune, sir, what may not only depose me from my office and my station, but withdraw entirely from me the favour and protection of my uncle, Lord Danesbury.'

'Then why the devil do you do it?' cried Kearney angrily.

'Why do I do what, sir? I am not aware of any action of mine you should question with such energy.'

'I mean, if it only tends to ruin your prospects and disgust your family, why do you persist, sir? I was going to say more, and ask with what face you presume to come and tell these things to *me*?'

'I am really unable to understand you, sir.'

'Mayhap, we are both of us in the same predicament,' cried Kearney, as he wiped his brow in proof of his confusion.

'Had you accorded me a very little patience, I might, perhaps, have explained myself.'

Not trusting himself with a word, Kearney nodded, and the other went on: 'The post this morning brought me, among other things, these two newspapers, with penmarks in the margin to direct my attention. This is the *Lily of Londonderry*, a wild Orange print; this the *Banner of Ulster*, a journal of the same complexion. Here is what the *Lily* says: "Our county member, Sir Jonas Gettering, is now in a position to call the attention of Parliament to a document which will distinctly show how Her Majesty's Ministers are not only in close correspondence with the leaders of Fenianism, but that Irish rebellion receives its support and comfort from the present Cabinet. Grave as this charge is, and momentous as would be the consequences of such an allegation if unfounded, we repeat that such a document is in existence, and that we who write these lines have held it in our hands and have perused it."

'The *Banner* copies the paragraph, and adds, "We give all the publicity in our power to a statement which, from our personal knowledge, we can declare to be true. If the disclosures which a debate on this subject must inevitably lead to will not convince Englishmen that Ireland is now governed by a party whose falsehood and subtlety not even Machiavelli himself could justify, we are free to declare we are ready to join the Nationalists to-morrow, and to cry out for a Parliament in College Green, in preference to a Holy Inquisition at Westminster."'

'That fellow has blood in him,' cried Kearney, with enthusiasm, 'and I go a long way with him.'

'That may be, sir, and I am sorry to hear it,' said Walpole coldly; 'but what I am concerned to tell you is, that the document or memorandum here alluded to was among my papers, and abstracted from them since I have been here.'

'So that there *was* actually such a paper?' broke in Kearney.

'There was a paper which the malevolence of a party journalist could convert to the support of such a charge. What concerns me more immediately is, that it has been stolen from my despatch-box.'

'Are you certain of that?'

'I believe I can prove it. The only day in which I was busied with these papers, I carried them down to the library, and with my own hands I brought them back to my room and placed them under lock and key at once. The box bears no trace of having been broken, so that the only solution is a key. Perhaps my own key may have been used to open it, for the document is gone.'

'This is a bad business,' said Kearney sorrowfully.

'It is ruin to *me*,' cried Walpole, with passion. 'Here is a despatch from Lord Danesbury, commanding me immediately to go over to him in Wales, and I can guess easily what has occasioned the order.'

'I'll send for a force of Dublin detectives. I'll write to the chief of the police. I'll not rest till I have every one in the house examined on oath,' cried Kearney. 'What was it like? Was it a despatch—was it in an envelope?'

'It was a mere memorandum—a piece of post-paper, and headed, "Draught of instruction touching D. D. Forward to chief constable of police at Letterkenny. October 9th."'

'But you had no direct correspondence with Donogan?'

'I believe, sir, I need not assure you I had not. The malevolence of party has alone the merit of such an imputation. For reasons of state, we desired to observe a certain course towards the man, and Orange malignity is pleased to misrepresent and calumniate us.'

'And can't you say so in Parliament?'

'So we will, sir, and the nation will believe us. Meanwhile, see the mischief that the miserable slander will reflect upon our administration here, and remember that the people who could alone contradict the story are those very Fenians who will benefit by its being believed.'

'Do your suspicions point to any one in particular? Do you believe that Curtis——'

'I had it in my hand the day after he left.'

'Was any one aware of its existence here but yourself?'

'None—wait, I am wrong. Your niece saw it. She was in the library one day. I was engaged in writing, and as we grew to talk over the country, I chanced to show her the despatch.'

'Let us ask her if she remembers whether any servant was about at the time, or happened to enter the room.'

'I can myself answer that question. I know there was not.'

'Let us call her down and see what she remembers,' said Kearney.

'I'd rather not, sir. A mere question in such a case would be offensive, and I would not risk the chance. What I would most wish is, to place my despatch-box, with the key, in your keeping, for the purposes of the inquiry, for I must start in half an hour. I have sent for post-horses to Moate, and ordered a special train to town. I shall, I hope, catch the eight o'clock boat for Holyhead, and be with his lordship before this time to-morrow. If I do not see the ladies, for I believe they are out walking, will you make my excuses and my adieux? my confusion and discomfiture will, I feel sure, plead for me. It would not be, perhaps, too much to ask for any information that a police inquiry might elicit; and if either of the young ladies would vouchsafe me a line to say what, if anything, has been discovered, I should feel deeply gratified.'

'I'll look to that. You shall be informed.'

'There was another question that I much desired to speak of,' and here he hesitated and faltered; 'but perhaps, on every score, it is as well I should defer it till my return to Ireland.'

'You know best, whatever it is,' said the old man dryly.

'Yes, I think so. I am sure of it.' A hurried shake-hands followed, and he was gone.

It is but right to add that a glance at the moment through the window had shown him the wearer of a muslin dress turning into the copse outside the garden, and Walpole dashed down the stairs and hurried in the direction he saw Nina take, with all the speed he could.

'Get my luggage on the carriage, and have everything ready,' said he, as the horses were drawn up at the door. 'I shall return in a moment.'

CHAPTER LI

AWAKENINGS

When Walpole hurried into the beech alley which he had seen Nina take, and followed her in all haste, he did not stop to

question himself why he did so. Indeed, if prudence were to be consulted, there was every reason in the world why he should rather have left his leave-takings to the care of Mr. Kearney than assume the charge of them himself; but if young gentlemen who fall in love were only to be logical or 'consequent,' the tender passion would soon lose some of the contingencies which give it much of its charm, and people who follow such occupations as mine would discover that they had lost one of the principal employments of their lifetime.

As he went along, however, he bethought him that as it was to say good-bye he now followed her, it behoved him to blend his leave-taking with that pledge of a speedy return, which, like the effects of light in landscape, bring out the various tints in the richest colouring, and mark more distinctly all that is in shadow. 'I shall at least see,' muttered he to himself, 'how far my presence here serves to brighten her daily life, and what amount of gloom my absence will suggest.' Cecil Walpole was one of a class—and I hasten to say it is a class—who, if not very lavish of their own affections, or accustomed to draw largely on their own emotions, are very fond of being loved themselves, and not only are they convinced that as there can be nothing more natural or reasonable than to love them, it is still a highly commendable feature in the person who carries that love to the extent of a small idolatry, and makes it the business of a life. To worship the men of this order constitutes in their eyes a species of intellectual superiority for which they are grateful, and this same gratitude represents to themselves all of love their natures are capable of feeling.

He knew thoroughly that Nina was not alone the most beautiful woman he had ever seen, that the fascinations of her manner, and her grace of movement and gesture, exercised a sway that was almost magic; that in quickness to apprehend and readiness to reply, she scarcely had an equal; and that whether she smiled, or looked pensive, or listened, or spoke, there was an absorbing charm about her that made one forget all else around her, and unable to see any but her; and yet, with all this consciousness, he recognised no trait about her so thoroughly attractive as that she admired *him*.

Let me not be misunderstood. The same sentiment can be at times something very different from a mere egotism—not that I mean to say it was such in the present case. Cecil Walpole fully represented the order he belonged to, and was a most well-looking, well-dressed, and well-bred young gentleman, only suggesting the reflection that, to live amongst such a class pure and un-

Nina Kostalergi was busily engaged in pinning up the skirt of her dress.

diluted, would be little better than a life passed in the midst of French communism.

I have said that, after his fashion, he was 'in love' with her, and so, after his fashion, he wanted to say that he was going away, and to tell her not to be utterly disconsolate till he came back again. 'I can imagine,' thought he, 'how I made her life here, how, in developing the features that attract *me*, I made her a very different creature to herself.'

It was not at all unpleasant to him to think that the people who should surround her were so unlike himself. 'The barbarians,' as he courteously called them to himself, 'will be very hard to endure. Nor am I very sorry for it, only she must catch nothing of their traits in accommodating herself to their habits. On that I must strongly insist. Whether it be by singing their silly ballads—that four-note melody they call "Irish music," or through mere imitation, she has already caught a slight accent of the country. She must get rid of this. She will have to divest herself of all her "Kilgobbinries" ere I present her to my friends in town.' Apart from these disparagements, she could, as he expressed it, 'hold her own,' and people take a very narrow view of the social dealings of the world, who fail to see how much occasion a woman has for the exercise of tact and temper and discretion and ready-wittedness and generosity in all the well-bred intercourse of life. Just as Walpole had arrived at that stage of reflection to recognise that she was exactly the woman to suit him and push his fortunes with the world, he reached a part of the wood where a little space had been cleared, and a few rustic seats scattered about to make a halting-place. The sound of voices caught his ear, and he stopped, and now, looking stealthily through the brushwood, he saw Gorman O'Shea as he lay in a lounging attitude on a bench and smoked his cigar, while Nina Kostalergi was busily engaged in pinning up the skirt of her dress in a festoon fashion, which, to Cecil's ideas at least, displayed more of a marvellously pretty instep and ankle than he thought strictly warranted. Puzzling as this seemed, the first words she spoke gave the explanation.

'Don't flatter yourself, most valiant soldier, that you are going to teach me the "Czardasz." I learned it years ago from Tassilo Esterhazy; but I asked you to come here to set me right about that half-minuet step that begins it. I believe I have got into the habit of doing the man's part, for I used to be Pauline Esterhazy's partner after Tassilo went away.'

'You had a precious dancing-master in Tassilo,' growled out O'Shea. 'The greatest scamp in the Austrian army.'

'I know nothing of the moralities of the Austrian army, but the count was a perfect gentleman, and a special friend of mine.'

'I am sorry for it,' was the gruff rejoinder.

'You have nothing to grieve for, sir. You have no vested interest to be imperilled by anything that I do.'

'Let us not quarrel, at all events,' said he, as he arose with some alacrity and flung away his cigar; and Walpole turned away, as little pleased with what he had heard as dissatisfied with himself for having listened. 'And we call these things accidents,' muttered he; 'but I believe Fortune means more generously by us when she crosses our path in this wise. I almost wish I had gone a step farther, and stood before them. At least it would have finished this episode, and without a word. As it is, a mere phrase will do it—the simple question as to what progress she makes in dancing will show I know all. But do I know all?' Thus speculating and ruminating he went his way till he reached the carriage, and drove off at speed, for the first time in his life, really and deeply in love!

He made his journey safely, and arrived at Holyhead by daybreak. He had meant to go over deliberately all that he should say to the Viceroy, when questioned, as he expected to be, on the condition of Ireland. It was an old story, and with very few variations to enliven it.

How was it that, with all his Irish intelligence well arranged in his mind—the agrarian crime, the ineffective police, the timid juries, the insolence of the popular press, and the arrogant demands of the priesthood—how was it that, ready to state all these obstacles to right government, and prepared to show that it was only by 'out-jockeying' the parties, he could hope to win in Ireland still, that Greek girl, and what he called her perfidy, would occupy a most disproportionate share of his thoughts, and a larger place in his heart also? The simple truth is, that though up to this Walpole found immense pleasure in his flirtation with Nina Kostalergi, yet his feeling for her now was nearer love than anything he had experienced before. The bare suspicion that a woman could jilt him, or the possible thought that a rival could be found to supplant him, gave, by the very pain it occasioned, such an interest to the episode, that he could scarcely think of anything else. That the most effectual way to deal with the Greek was to renew his old relations with his cousin Lady Maude was clear enough. 'At least I shall seem to be the traitor,' thought he, 'and she shall not glory in the thought of having deceived *me*.' While he was still revolving

these thoughts, he arrived at the castle, and learned as he crossed the door that his lordship was impatient to see him.

Lord Danesbury had never been a fluent speaker in public, while in private life a natural indolence of disposition, improved, so to say, by an Eastern life, had made him so sparing of his words, that at times when he was ill or indisposed he could never be said to converse at all, and his talk consisted of very short sentences strung loosely together, and not unfrequently so ill-connected as to show that an unexpressed thought very often intervened between the uttered fragments. Except to men who, like Walpole, knew him intimately, he was all but unintelligible. The private secretary, however, understood how to fill up the blanks in any discourse, and so follow out indications which, to less practised eyes, left no footmarks behind them.

His Excellency, slowly recovering from a sharp attack of gout, was propped by pillows, and smoking a long Turkish pipe, as Cecil entered the room and saluted him. 'Come at last,' was his lordship's greeting. 'Ought to have been here weeks ago. Read that.' And he pushed towards him a *Times*, with a mark on the margin: 'To ask the Secretary for Ireland whether the statement made by certain newspapers in the North of a correspondence between the Castle authorities and the Fenian leader was true, and whether such correspondence could be laid on the table of the House?'

'Read it out,' cried the Viceroy, as Walpole conned over the paragraph somewhat slowly to himself.

'I think, my lord, when you have heard a few words of explanation from me, you will see that this charge has not the gravity these newspaper-people would like to attach to it.'

'Can't be explained—nothing could justify—infernal blunder—and must go.'

'Pray, my lord, vouchsafe me even five minutes.'

'See it all—balderdash—explain nothing—Cardinal more offended than the rest—and here, read.' And he pushed a letter towards him, dated Downing Street, and marked private. 'The idiot you left behind you has been betrayed into writing to the rebels and making conditions with them. To disown him now is not enough.'

'Really, my lord, I don't see why I should submit to the indignity of reading more of this.'

His Excellency crushed the letter in his hand, and puffed very vigorously at his pipe, which was nearly extinguished. 'Must go,' said he at last, as a fresh volume of smoke rolled forth.

'That I can believe—that I can understand, my lord. When

you tell me you cease to endorse my pledges, I feel I am a bankrupt in your esteem.'

'Others smashed in the same insolvency—inconceivable blunder—where was Cartwright?—what was Holmes about? No one in Dublin to keep you out of this cursed folly?'

'Until your lordship's patience will permit me to say a few words, I cannot hope to justify my conduct.'

'No justifying—no explaining—no! regular smash and complete disgrace. Must go.'

'I am quite ready to go. Your Excellency has no need to recall me to the necessity.'

'Knew it all—and against my will, too—said so from the first—thing I never liked—nor see my way in. Must go—must go.'

'I presume, my lord, I may leave you now. I want a bath and a cup of coffee.'

'Answer that!' was the gruff reply, as he tossed across the table a few lines signed, 'Bertie Spencer, Private Secretary.'

'"I am directed to request that Mr. Walpole will enable the Right Honourable Mr. Annihough to give the flattest denial to the inclosed."'

'That must be done at once,' said the Viceroy, as the other ceased to read the note.

'It is impossible, my lord; I cannot deny my own handwriting.'

'Annihough will find some road out of it,' muttered the other. '*You* were a fool, and mistook your instructions, or the *constable* was a fool and required a misdirection, or the *Fenian* was a fool, which he would have been if he gave the pledge you asked for. Must go, all the same.'

'But I am quite ready to go, my lord,' rejoined Walpole angrily. 'There is no need to insist so often on that point.'

'Who talks—who thinks of you, sir?' cried the other, with an irritated manner. 'I speak of myself. It is *I* must resign—no great sacrifice, perhaps, after all; stupid office, false position, impracticable people. Make them all Papists to-morrow, and ask to be Hindus. They've got the land, and not content if they can't shoot the landlords!'

'If you think, my lord, that by any personal explanation of mine, I could enable the Minister to make his answer in the House more plausible——'

'Leave the plausibility to himself, sir,' and then he added, half aloud, 'he'll be unintelligible enough without *you*. There, go, and get some breakfast—come back afterwards, and I'll

dictate my letter of resignation. Maude has had a letter from Atlee. Shrewd fellow, Atlee—done the thing well.'

As Walpole was near the door, his Excellency said, 'You can have Guatemala, if they have not given it away. It will get you out of Europe, which is the first thing, and with the yellow fever it may do more.'

'I am profoundly grateful, my lord,' said he, bowing low.

'Maude, of course, would not go, so it ends *that*.'

'I am deeply touched by the interest your lordship vouchsafes to my concerns.'

'Try and live five years, and you'll have a retiring allowance. The last fellow did, but was eaten by a crocodile out bathing.' And with this he resumed his *Times*, and turned away, while Walpole hastened off to his room, in a frame of mind very far from comfortable or reassuring.

CHAPTER LII

A CHANCE AGREEMENT

As Dick Kearney and young O'Shea had never attained any close intimacy—a strange sort of half-jealousy, inexplicable as to its cause, served to keep them apart—it was by mere accident that the two young men met one morning after breakfast in the garden, and on Kearney's offer of a cigar, the few words that followed led to a conversation.

'I cannot pretend to give you a choice Havana, like one of Walpole's,' said Dick, 'but you'll perhaps find it smokeable.'

'I'm not difficult,' said the other; 'and as to Mr. Walpole's tobacco, I don't think I ever tasted it.'

'And I,' rejoined the other, 'as seldom as I could; I mean, only when politeness obliged me.'

'I thought you liked him?' said Gorman shortly.

'I? Far from it. I thought him a consummate puppy, and I saw that he looked down on us as inveterate savages.'

'He was a favourite with your ladies, I think?'

'Certainly not with my sister, and I doubt very much with my cousin. Do *you* like him?'

'No, not at all; but then he belongs to a class of men I neither understand nor sympathise with. Whatever *I* know of life is associated with downright hard work. As a soldier I had my five hours' daily drill and the care of my equipments, as a lieutenant I had to see that my men kept to their duty, and

whenever I chanced to have a little leisure, I could not give it up to ennui or consent to feel bored and wearied.'

'And do you mean to say you had to groom your horse and clean your arms when you served in the ranks?'

'Not always. As a cadet I had a soldier-servant, what we call a "Bursche"; but there were periods when I was out of funds, and barely able to grope my way to the next quarter-day, and at these times I had but one meal a day, and obliged to draw my waist-belt pretty tight to make me feel I had eaten enough. A Bursche costs very little, but I could not spare even that little.'

'Confoundedly hard that.'

'All my own fault. By a little care and foresight, even without thrift, I had enough to live as well as I ought; but a reckless dash of the old spendthrift blood I came of would master me now and then, and I'd launch out into some extravagance that would leave me penniless for months after.'

'I believe I can understand that. One does get horribly bored by the monotony of a well-to-do existence: just as I feel my life here—almost insupportable.'

'But you are going into Parliament; you are going to be a great public man.'

'That bubble has burst already; don't you know what happened at Birr? They tore down all Miller's notices and mine, they smashed our booths, beat our voters out of the town, and placed Donogan—the rebel Donogan—at the head of the poll, and the head-centre is now M.P. for King's County.'

'And he has a right to sit in the House?'

'There's the question. The matter is discussed every day in the newspapers, and there are as many for as against him. Some aver that the popular will is a sovereign edict that rises above all eventualities; others assert that the sentence which pronounces a man a felon declares him to be dead in law.'

'And which side do you incline to?'

'I believe in the latter: he'll not be permitted to take his seat.'

'You'll have another chance, then?'

'No; I'll venture no more. Indeed, but for this same man Donogan, I had never thought of it. He filled my head with ideas of a great part to be played and a proud place to be occupied, and that even without high abilities, a man of a strong will, a fixed resolve, and an honest conscience, might at this time do great things for Ireland.'

'And then betrayed you?'

'No such thing; he no more dreamed of Parliament himself

than you do now. He knew he was liable to the law,—he was hiding from the police—and well aware that there was a price upon his head.'

'But if he was true to you, why did he not refuse this honour? why did he not decline to be elected?'

'They never gave him the choice. Don't you see, it is one of the strange signs of the strange times we are living in that the people fix upon certain men as their natural leaders and compel them to march in the van, and that it is the force at the back of these leaders that, far more than their talents, makes them formidable in public life.'

'I only follow it in part. I scarcely see what they aim at, and I do not know if they see it more clearly themselves. And now, what will you turn to?'

'I wish you could tell me.'

'About as blank a future as my own,' muttered Gorman.

'Come, come, *you* have a career: you are a lieutenant of lancers; in time you will be a captain, and eventually a colonel, and who knows but a general at last, with Heaven knows how many crosses and medals on your breast.'

'Nothing less likely—the day is gone by when Englishmen were advanced to places of high honour and trust in the Austrian army. There are no more field-marshals like Nugent than major-generals like O'Connell. I might be made a Rittmeister, and if I lived long enough, and was not superannuated, a major; but there my ambition must cease.'

'And you are content with that prospect?'

'Of course I am not. I go back to it with something little short of despair.'

'Why go back, then?'

'Tell me what else to do—tell me what other road in life to take—show me even one alternative.'

The silence that now succeeded lasted several minutes, each immersed in his own thoughts, and each doubtless convinced how little presumption he had to advise or counsel the other.

'Do you know, O'Shea,' cried Kearney, 'I used to fancy that this Austrian life of yours was a mere caprice—that you took "a cast," as we call it in the hunting-field, amongst those fellows to see what they were like and what sort of an existence was theirs—but that being your aunt's heir, and with a snug estate that must one day come to you, it was a mere "lark," and not to be continued beyond a year or two?'

'Not a bit of it. I never presumed to think I should be my aunt's heir—and now less than ever. Do you know, that even

the small pension she has allowed me hitherto is now about to be withdrawn, and I shall be left to live on my pay?'

'How much does that mean?'

'A few pounds more or less than you pay for your saddle-horse at livery at Dycers'.'

'You don't mean that?'

'I do mean it, and even that beggarly pittance is stopped when I am on my leave; so that at this moment my whole worldly wealth is here,' and he took from his pocket a handful of loose coin, in which a few gold pieces glittered amidst a mass of discoloured and smooth-looking silver.

'On my oath, I believe you are the richer man of the two,' cried Kearney, 'for except a few half-crowns on my dressing-table, and some coppers, I don't believe I am master of a coin with the Queen's image.'

'I say, Kearney, what a horrible take-in we should prove to mothers with daughters to marry!'

'Not a bit of it. You may impose upon any one else—your tailor, your bootmaker, even the horsy gent that jobs your cabriolet, but you'll never cheat the mamma who has the daughter on sale.'

Gorman could not help laughing at the more than ordinary irritability with which these words were spoken, and charged him at last with having uttered a personal experience.

'True, after all!' said Dick, half-indolently. 'I used to spoon a pretty girl up in Dublin, ride with her when I could, and dance with her at all the balls, and a certain chum of mine—a Joe Atlee—of whom you may have heard—undertook, simply by a series of artful rumours as to my future prospects—now extolling me as a man of fortune and a fine estate, to-morrow exhibiting me as a mere pretender with a mock title and mock income—to determine how I should be treated in this family; and he would say to me, "Dick, you are going to be asked to dinner on Saturday next"; or "I say, old fellow, they're going to leave you out of that picnic at Powerscourt. You'll find the Clancys rather cold at your next meeting."'

'And he would be right in his guess?'

'To the letter! Ay, and I shame to say that the young girl answered the signal as promptly as the mother.'

'I hope it cured you of your passion?'

'I don't know that it did. When you begin to like a girl, and find that she has regularly installed herself in a corner of your heart, there is scarcely a thing she can do you'll not discover a good reason for; and even when your ingenuity fails, go and pay a visit; there is some artful witchery in that creation you have

built up about her—for I heartily believe most of us are merely clothing a sort of lay figure of loveliness with attributes of our fancy—and the end of it is, we are about as wise about our idols as the South Sea savages in their homage to the gods of their own carving.'

'I don't think that!' said Gorman sternly. 'I could no more invent the fascination that charms me than I could model a Venus or an Ariadne.'

'I see where your mistake lies. You do all this, and never know you do it. Mind, I am only giving you Joe Atlee's theory all this time; for though I believe in, I never invented it.'

'And who is Atlee?'

'A chum of mine—a clever dog enough—who, as he says himself, takes a very low opinion of mankind, and in consequence finds this a capital world to live in.'

'I should hate the fellow.'

'Not if you met him. He can be very companionable, though I never saw any one take less trouble to please. He is popular almost everywhere.'

'I know I should hate him.'

'My cousin Nina thought the same, and declared, from the mere sight of his photograph, that he was false and treacherous, and Heaven knows what else besides; and now she 'll not suffer a word in his disparagement. She began exactly as you say you would, by a strong prejudice against him. I remember the day he came down here—her manner towards him was more than distant; and I told my sister Kate how it offended me; and Kate only smiled and said, "Have a little patience, Dick."'

'And you took the advice? You did have a little patience?'

'Yes; and the end is they are firm friends. I'm not sure they don't correspond.'

'Is there love in the case, then?'

'That is what I cannot make out. So far as I know either of them, there is no trustfulness in their dispositions; each of them must see into the nature of the other. I have heard Joe Atlee say, "With that woman for a wife, a man might safely bet on his success in life." And she herself one day owned, "If a girl was obliged to marry a man without sixpence, she might take Atlee."'

'So, I have it, they will be man and wife yet!'

'Who knows! Have another weed?'

Gorman declined the offered cigar, and again a pause in the conversation followed. At last he suddenly said, 'She told me she thought she would marry Walpole.'

'She told *you* that? How did it come about to make *you* such a confidence?'

'Just this way. I was getting a little—not spooney—but attentive, and rather liked hanging after her; and in one of our walks in the wood—and there was no flirting at the time between us—she suddenly said, "I don't think you are half a bad fellow, lieutenant." "Thanks for the compliment," said I coldly. She never heeded my remark, but went on, "I mean, in fact, that if you had something to live for, and somebody to care about, there is just the sort of stuff in you to make you equal to both." Not exactly knowing what I said, and half, only half in earnest, I answered, "Why can I not have one to care for?" And I looked tenderly into her eyes as I spoke. She did not wince under my glance. Her face was calm, and her colour did not change; and she was full a minute before she said, with a faint sigh, "I suppose I shall marry Cecil Walpole." "Do you mean," said I, "against your will?" "Who told you I had a will, sir?" said she haughtily; "or that if I had, I should now be walking here in this wood alone with you? No, no," added she hurriedly, "you cannot understand me. There is nothing to be offended at. Go and gather me some of those wild flowers, and we'll talk of something else."'

'How like her!—how like her!' said Dick, and then looked sad and pondered. 'I was very near falling in love with her myself!' said he, after a considerable pause.

'She has a way of curing a man if he should get into such an indiscretion,' muttered Gorman, and there was bitterness in his voice as he spoke.

'Listen! listen to that!' and from an open window of the house there came the prolonged cadence of a full sweet voice, as Nina was singing an Irish ballad air. 'That's for my father! "Kathleen Mavourneen" is one of his favourites, and she can make him cry over it.'

'I'm not very soft-hearted,' muttered Gorman, 'but she gave me a sense of fullness in the throat, like choking, the other day, that I vowed to myself I'd never listen to that song again.'

'It is not her voice—it is not the music—there is some witchery in the woman herself that does it,' cried Dick, almost fiercely. 'Take a walk with her in the wood, saunter down one of these alleys in the garden, and I'll be shot if your heart will not begin to beat in another fashion, and your brain to weave all sorts of bright fancies, in which she will form the chief figure; and though you'll be half inclined to declare your love, and swear that you cannot live without her, some terror will tell you not to

break the spell of your delight, but to go on walking there at her side, and hearing her words just as though that ecstasy could last for ever.'

'I suspect you are in love with her,' said O'Shea dryly.

'Not now. Not now; and I'll take care not to have a relapse,' said he gravely.

'How do you mean to manage that?'

'The only one way it is possible—not to see her, nor to hear her—not to live in the same land with her. I have made up my mind to go to Australia. I don't well know what to do when I get there; but whatever it be, and whatever it cost me to bear, I shall meet it without shrinking, for there will be no old associates to look on and remark upon my shabby clothes and broken boots.'

'What will the passage cost you?' asked Gorman eagerly.

'I have ascertained that for about fifty pounds I can land myself in Melbourne, and if I have a ten-pound note after, it is as much as I mean to provide.'

'If I can raise the money, I'll go with you,' said O'Shea.

'Will you? is this serious? is it a promise?'

'I pledge my word on it. I'll go over to the Barn to-day and see my aunt. I thought up to this I could not bring myself to go there, but I will now. It is for the last time in my life, and I must say good-bye, whether she helps me or not.'

'You'll scarcely like to ask her for money,' said Dick.

'Scarcely—at all events, I'll see her, and I'll tell her that I'm going away, with no other thought in my mind than of all the love and affection she had for me, worse luck mine that I have not got them still.'

'Shall I walk over with——? would you rather be alone?'

'I believe so! I think I should like to be alone.'

'Let us meet, then, on this spot to-morrow, and decide what is to be done.'

'Agreed!' cried O'Shea, and with a warm shake-hands to ratify the pledge, they parted: Dick towards the lower part of the garden, while O'Shea turned towards the house.

CHAPTER LIII

A SCRAPE

We have all of us felt how depressing is the sensation felt in a family circle in the first meeting after the departure of their

guests. The friends who have been staying some time in your house not only bring to the common stock their share of pleasant converse and companionship, but, in the quality of strangers, they exact a certain amount of effort for their amusement, which is better for him who gives than for the recipient, and they impose that small reserve which excludes the purely personal inconveniences and contrarieties, which unhappily, in strictly family intercourse, have no small space allotted them for discussion.

It is but right to say that they who benefit most by, and most gratefully acknowledge, this boon of the visitors, are the young. The elders, sometimes more disposed to indolence than effort, sometimes irritable at the check essentially put upon many little egotisms of daily use, and oftener than either, perhaps, glad to get back to the old groove of home discussion, unrestrained by the presence of strangers; the elders are now and then given to express a most ungracious gratitude for being once again to themselves, and free to be as confidential and outspoken and disagreeable as their hearts desire.

The dinner at Kilgobbin Castle, on the day I speak of, consisted solely of the Kearney family, and except in the person of the old man himself, no trace of pleasantry could be detected. Kate had her own share of anxieties. A number of notices had been served by refractory tenants for demands they were about to prefer for improvements, under the new land act. The passion for litigation, so dear to the Irish peasant's heart—that sense of having something to be quibbled for, so exciting to the imaginative nature of the Celt, had taken possession of all the tenants on the estate, and even the well-to-do and the satisfied were now bestirring themselves to think if they had not some grievance to be turned into profit, and some possible hardship to be discounted into an abatement.

Dick Kearney, entirely preoccupied by the thought of his intended journey, already began to feel that the things of home touched him no longer. A few months more and he should be far away from Ireland and her interests, and why should he harass himself about the contests of party or the balance of factions, which never again could have any bearing on his future life. His whole thought was what arrangement he could make with his father by which, for a little present assistance, he might surrender all his right on the entail and give up Kilgobbin for ever.

As for Nina, her complexities were too many and too much interwoven for our investigation; and there were thoughts of all the various persons she had met in Ireland, mingled with scenes

of the past, and, more strangely still, the people placed in situations and connections which by no likelihood should they ever have occupied. The thought that the little comedy of everyday life, which she relished immensely, was now to cease for lack of actors, made her serious—almost sad—and she seldom spoke during the meal.

At Lord Kilgobbin's request, that they would not leave him to take his wine alone, they drew their chairs round the dining-room fire; but, except the bright glow of the ruddy turf, and the pleasant look of the old man himself, there was little that smacked of the agreeable fireside.

'What has come over you girls this evening?' said the old man. 'Are you in love, or has the man that ought to be in love with either of you discovered it was only a mistake he was making?'

'Ask Nina, sir,' said Kate gravely.

'Perhaps you are right, uncle,' said Nina dreamily.

'In which of my guesses—the first or the last?'

'Don't puzzle me, sir, for I have no head for a subtle distinction. I only meant to say it is not so easy to be in love without mistakes. You mistake realities and traits for something not a bit like them, and you mistake yourself by imagining that you mind them.'

'I don't think I understand you,' said the old man.

'Very likely not, sir. I do not know if I had a meaning that I could explain.'

'Nina wants to tell you, my lord, that the right man has not come forward yet, and she does not know whether she'll keep the place open in her heart for him any longer,' said Dick, with a half-malicious glance.

'That terrible Cousin Dick! nothing escapes him,' said Nina, with a faint smile.

'Is there any more in the newspapers about that scandal of the Government?' cried the old man, turning to Kate. 'Is there not going to be some inquiry as to whether his Excellency wrote to the Fenians?'

'There are a few words here, papa,' cried Kate, opening the paper. '"In reply to the question of Sir Barnes Malone as to the late communications alleged to have passed between the head of the Irish Government and the head-centre of the Fenians, the Right Honourable the First Lord of the Treasury said, 'That the question would be more properly addressed to the noble lord the Secretary for Ireland, who was not then in the House. Meanwhile, sir,' continued he, 'I will take on myself the responsibility of saying that in this, as in a variety of other cases, the zeal of

party has greatly outstripped the discretion that should govern political warfare. The exceptional state of a nation, in which the administration of justice mainly depends on those aids which a rigid morality might disparage—the social state of a people whose integrity calls for the application of means the most certain to disseminate distrust and disunion, are facts which constitute reasons for political action that, however assailable in the mere abstract, the mind of statesmanlike form will at once accept as solid and effective, and to reject which would only show that, in overlooking the consequences of sentiment, a man can ignore the most vital interests of his country.'"'

'Does he say that they wrote to Donogan?' cried Kilgobbin, whose patience had been sorely pushed by the Premier's exordium.

'Let me read on, papa.'

'Skip all that, and get down to a simple question and answer, Kitty; don't read the long sentences.'

'This is how he winds up, papa. "I trust I have now, sir, satisfied the House that there are abundant reasons why this correspondence should not be produced on the table, while I have further justified my noble friend for a course of action in which the humanity of the man takes no lustre from the glory of the statesman"—then there are some words in Latin—"and the right hon. gentleman resumed his seat amidst loud cheers, in which some of the Opposition were heard to join."'

'I want to be told, after all, did they write the letter to say Donogan was to be let escape?'

'Would it have been a great crime, uncle?' said Nina artlessly.

'I'm not going into that. I'm only asking what the people over us say is the best way to govern us. I'd like to know, once for all, what was wrong and what was right in Ireland.'

'Has not the Premier just told you, sir,' replied Nina, 'that it is always the reverse of what obtains everywhere else?'

'I have had enough of it, anyhow,' cried Dick, who, though not intending it before, now was carried away by a momentary gust of passion to make the avowal.

'Have you been in the Cabinet all this time, then, without our knowing it?' asked Nina archly.

'It is not of the Cabinet I was speaking, mademoiselle. It was of the country.' And he answered haughtily.

'And where would you go, Dick, and find better?' said Kate.

'Anywhere. I should find better in America, in Canada, in the Far West, in New Zealand—but I mean to try in Australia.'

'And what will you do when you get there?' asked Kilgobbin, with a grim humour in his look.

'Do tell me, Cousin Dick, for who knows that it might not suit me also?'

Young Kearney filled his glass, and drained it without speaking. At last he said, 'It will be for you, sir, to say if I make the trial. It is clear enough, I have no course open to me here. For a few hundred pounds, or, indeed, for anything you like to give me, you get rid of me for ever. It will be the one piece of economy my whole life comprises.'

'Stay at home, Dick, and give to your own country the energy you are willing to bestow on a strange land,' said Kate.

'And labour side by side with the peasant I have looked down upon since I was able to walk.'

'Don't look down on him, then—do it no longer. If you would treat the first stranger you met in the bush as your equal, begin the Christian practice in your own country.'

'But he needn't do that at all,' broke in the old man. 'If he would take to strong shoes and early rising here at Kilgobbin, he need never go to Geelong for a living. Your great-grandfathers lived here for centuries, and the old house that sheltered them is still standing.'

'What should I stay for——?' He had got thus far when his eyes met Nina's, and he stopped and hesitated, and, as a deep blush covered his face, faltered out, 'Gorman O'Shea says he is ready to go with me, and two fellows with less to detain them in their own country would be hard to find.'

'O'Shea will do well enough,' said the old man; 'he was not brought up to kid-leather boots and silk linings in his greatcoat. There's stuff in *him*, and if it comes to sleeping under a haystack or dining on a red-herring, he'll not rise up with rheumatism or heartburn. And what's better than all, he'll not think himself a hero because he mends his own boots or lights his own kitchen-fire.'

'A letter for your honour,' said the servant, entering with a very informal-looking note on coarse paper, and fastened with a wafer. 'The gossoon, sir, is waiting for an answer; he run every mile from Moate.'

'Read it, Kitty,' said the old man, not heeding the servant's comment.

'It is dated "Moate Jail, seven o'clock,"' said Kitty, as she read: '"Dear Sir,—I have got into a stupid scrape, and have been committed to jail. Will you come, or send some one to bail me out. The thing is a mere trifle, but the 'being locked up' is very hard to bear.—Yours always, G. O'Shea."'

'Is this more Fenian work?' cried Kilgobbin.

'I'm certain it is not, sir,' said Dick. 'Gorman O'Shea has no liking for them, nor is he the man to sympathise with what he owns he cannot understand. It is a mere accidental row.'

'At all events, we must see to set him at liberty. Order the gig, Dick, and while they are putting on the harness, I'll finish this decanter of port. If it wasn't that we're getting retired shopkeepers on the bench, we'd not see an O'Shea sent to prison like a gossoon that stole a bunch of turnips.'

'What has he been doing, I wonder?' said Nina, as she drew her arm within Kate's and left the room.

'Some loud talk in the bar-parlour, perhaps,' was Kate's reply, and the toss of her head as she said it implied more even than the words.

CHAPTER LIV

HOW IT BEFELL

While Lord Kilgobbin and his son are plodding along towards Moate with a horse not long released from the harrow, and over a road which the late rains had sorely damaged, the moment is not inopportune to explain the nature of the incident, small enough in its way, that called on them for this journey at nightfall. It befell that when Miss Betty, indignant at her nephew's defection, and outraged that he should descend to call at Kilgobbin, determined to cast him off for ever, she also resolved upon a project over which she had long meditated, and to which the conversation at her late dinner greatly predisposed her.

The growing unfertility of the land, the sturdy rejection of the authority of the Church, manifested in so many ways by the people, had led Miss O'Shea to speculate more on the insecurity of landed property in Ireland than all the long list of outrages scheduled at assizes, or all the burning haggards that ever flared in a wintry sky. Her notion was to retire into some religious sisterhood, and away from life and its cares, to pass her remaining years in holy meditation and piety. She would have liked to have sold her estate and endowed some house or convent with the proceeds, but there were certain legal difficulties that stood in the way, and her law agent, M'Keown, must be seen and conferred with about these.

Her moods of passion were usually so very violent that she would stop at nothing; and in the torrent of her anger she would decide on a course of action which would colour a whole lifetime,

On the present occasion her first step was to write and acquaint M'Keown that she would be at Moodie's Hotel, Dominick Street, the same evening, and begged he might call there at eight or nine o'clock, as her business with him was pressing. Her next care was to let the house and lands of O'Shea's Barn to Peter Gill, for the term of one year, at a rent scarcely more than nominal, the said Gill binding himself to maintain the gardens, the shrubberies, and all the ornamental plantings in their accustomed order and condition. In fact, the extreme moderation of the rent was to be recompensed by the large space allotted to unprofitable land, and the great care he was pledged to exercise in its preservation; and while nominally the tenant, so manifold were the obligations imposed on him, he was in reality very little other than the caretaker of O'Shea's Barn and its dependencies. No fences were to be altered, or boundaries changed. All the copses of young timber were to be carefully protected by palings as heretofore, and even the ornamental cattle—the shorthorns, and the Alderneys, and a few favourite 'Kerries,'—were to be kept on the allotted paddocks; and to old Kattoo herself was allotted a loose box, with a small field attached to it, where she might saunter at will, and ruminate over the less happy quadrupeds that had to work for their subsistence.

Now, though Miss Betty, in the full torrent of her anger, had that much of method in her madness to remember the various details, whose interests were the business of her daily life, and so far made provision for the future of her pet cows and horses and dogs and guinea-fowls, so that if she should ever resolve to return she should find all as she had left it, the short paper of agreement by which she accepted Gill as her tenant was drawn up by her own hand, unaided by a lawyer; and, whether from the intemperate haste of the moment, or an unbounded confidence in Gill's honesty and fidelity, was not only carelessly expressed, but worded in a way that implied how her trustfulness exonerated her from anything beyond the expression of what she wished for, and what she believed her tenant would strictly perform. Gill's repeated phrase of 'Whatever her honour's ladyship liked' had followed every sentence as she read the document aloud to him; and the only real puzzle she had was to explain to the poor man's simple comprehension that she was not making a hard bargain with him, but treating him handsomely and in all confidence.

Shrewd and sharp as the old lady was, versed in the habits of the people, and long trained to suspect a certain air of dullness, by which, when asking the explanation of a point, they watch, with a native casuistry, to see what flaw or chink may open an

equivocal meaning or intention, she was thoroughly convinced by the simple and unreasoning concurrence this humble man gave to every proviso, and the hearty assurance he always gave 'that her honour knew what was best. God reward and keep her long in the way to do it!'—with all this, Miss O'Shea had not accomplished the first stage of her journey to Dublin, when Peter Gill was seated in the office of Pat M'Evoy, the attorney at Moate—a smart practitioner, who had done more to foster litigation between tenant and landlord than all the 'grievances' that ever were placarded by the press.

'When did you get this, Peter?' said the attorney, as he looked about, unable to find a date.

'This morning, sir, just before she started.'

'You'll have to come before the magistrate and make an oath of the date, and, by my conscience, it's worth the trouble.'

'Why, sir, what's in it?' cried Peter eagerly.

'I'm no lawyer, if she hasn't given you a clear possession of the place, subject to certain trusts, and even for the non-performance of these there is no penalty attached. When Councillor Holmes comes down at the assizes, I'll lay a case before him, and I'll wager a trifle, Peter, you will turn out to be an estated gentleman.'

'Blood alive!' was all Peter could utter.

Though the conversation that ensued occupied more than an hour, it is not necessary that we should repeat what occurred, nor state more than the fact that Peter went home fully assured that if O'Shea's Barn was not his own indisputably, it would be very hard to dispossess him, and that, at all events, the occupation was secure to him for the present. The importance that the law always attaches to possession Mr. M'Evoy took care to impress on Gill's mind, and he fully convinced him that a forcible seizure of the premises was far more to be apprehended than the slower process of a suit and a verdict.

It was about the third week after this opinion had been given, when young O'Shea walked over from Kilgobbin Castle to the Barn, intending to see his aunt and take his farewell of her.

Though he had steeled his heart against the emotion such a leave-taking was likely to evoke, he was in nowise prepared for the feelings the old place itself would call up, and as he opened a little wicket that led by a shrubbery walk to the cottage, he was glad to throw himself on the first seat he could find and wait till his heart could beat more measuredly. What a strange thing was life—at least that conventional life we make for ourselves—was his thought now. 'Here am I ready to cross the globe, to

be the servant, the labourer of some rude settler in the wilds of Australia, and yet I cannot be the herdsman here, and tend the cattle in the scenes that I love, where every tree, every bush, every shady nook, and every running stream is dear to me. I cannot serve my own kith and kin, but must seek my bread from the stranger! This is our glorious civilisation. I should like to hear in what consists its marvellous advantage.'

And then he began to think of those men of whom he had often heard—gentlemen and men of refinement—who had gone out to Australia, and who, in all the drudgery of daily labour—herding cattle on the plains or conducting droves of horses long miles of way—still managed to retain the habits of their better days, and, by the instinct of the breeding, which had become a nature, to keep intact in their hearts the thoughts and the sympathies and the affections that made them gentlemen.

'If my dear aunt only knew me as I know myself, she would let me stay here and serve her as the humblest labourer on her land. I can see no indignity in being poor and faring hardly. I have known coarse food and coarse clothing, and I never found that they either damped my courage or soured my temper.'

It might not seem exactly the appropriate moment to have bethought him of the solace of companionship in such poverty, but somehow his thoughts *did* take that flight, and unwarrantable as was the notion, he fancied himself returning at nightfall to his lowly cabin, and a certain girlish figure, whom our reader knows as Kate Kearney, standing watching for his coming.

There was no one to be seen about as he approached the house. The hall door, however, lay open. He entered and passed on to the little breakfast-parlour on the left. The furniture was the same as before, but a coarse fustian jacket was thrown on the back of a chair, and a clay-pipe and a paper of tobacco stood on the table. While he was examining these objects with some attention, a very ragged urchin, of some ten or eleven years, entered the room with a furtive step, and stood watching him. From this fellow, all that he could hear was that Miss Betty was gone away, and that Peter was at the Kilbeggan Market, and though he tried various questions, no other answers than these were to be obtained. Gorman now tried to see the drawing-room and the library, but these, as well as the dining-room, were all locked. He next essayed the bedrooms, but with the same unsuccess. At length he turned to his own well-known corner—the well-remembered little 'green-room'—which he loved to think his own. This too was locked, but Gorman remembered that by pressing the door underneath with his walking-stick, he could lift

the bolt from the old-fashioned receptacle that held it, and open the door. Curious to have a last look at a spot dear by so many memories, he tried the old artifice and succeeded.

He had still on his watch-chain the little key of an old marquetrie cabinet, where he was wont to write, and now he was determined to write a last letter to his aunt from the old spot, and send her his good-bye from the very corner where he had often come to wish her 'good-night.'

He opened the window and walked out on the little wooden balcony, from which the view extended over the lawn and the broad belt of wood that fenced the demesne. The Sliebh Bloom Mountain shone in the distance, and in the calm of an evening sunlight the whole picture had something in its silence and peacefulness of almost rapturous charm.

Who is there amongst us that has not felt, in walking through the rooms of some uninhabited house, with every appliance of human comfort strewn about, ease and luxury within, wavy trees and sloping lawn or eddying waters without—who, in seeing all these, has not questioned himself as to why this should be deserted? and why is there none to taste and feel all the blessedness of such a lot as life here should offer? Is not the world full of these places? is not the puzzle of this query of all lands and of all peoples? That ever-present delusion of what we should do—what be if we were aught other than ourselves: how happy, how contented, how unrepining, and how good—ay, even our moral nature comes into the compact — this delusion, I say, besets most of us through life, and we never weary of believing how cruelly fate has treated us, and how unjust destiny has been to a variety of good gifts and graces which are doomed to die unrecognised and unrequited.

I will not go to the length of saying that Gorman O'Shea's reflections went thus far, though they did go to the extent of wondering why his aunt had left this lovely spot, and asked himself, again and again, where she could possibly have found anything to replace it.

'My dearest aunt,' wrote he, 'in my own old room at the dear old desk, and on the spot knitted to my heart by happiest memories, I sit down to send you my last good-bye ere I leave Ireland for ever.

'It is in no mood of passing fretfulness or impatience that I resolve to go and seek my fortune in Australia. As I feel now, believing you are displeased with me, I have no heart to go further into the question of my own selfish interests, nor say why I resolve to give up soldiering, and why I turn to a new existence.

Had I been to you what I have hitherto been, had I the assurance that I possessed the old claim on your love which made me regard you as a dear mother, I should tell you of every step that has led me to this determination, and how carefully and anxiously I tried to study what might be the turning-point of my life.'

When he had written thus far, and his eyes had already grown glassy with the tears which would force their way across them, a heavy foot was heard on the stairs, the door was burst rudely open, and Peter Gill stood before him.

No longer, however, the old peasant in shabby clothes, and with his look half-shy, half-sycophant, but vulgarly dressed in broadcloth and bright buttons, a tall hat on his head, and a crimson cravat round his neck. His face was flushed, and his eye flashing and insolent, so that O'Shea only feebly recognised him by his voice.

'You thought you'd be too quick for me, young man,' said the fellow, and the voice in its thickness showed he had been drinking, 'and that you would do your bit of writing there before I'd be back, but I was up to you.'

'I really do not know what you mean,' cried O'Shea, rising; 'and as it is only too plain you have been drinking, I do not care to ask you.'

'Whether I was drinking or no is my own business; there's none to call me to account now. I am here in my own house, and I order you to leave it, and if you don't go by the way you came in, by my soul you'll go by that window!' A loud bang of his stick on the floor gave the emphasis to the last words, and whether it was the action or the absurd figure of the man himself overcame O'Shea, he burst out in a hearty laugh as he surveyed him. 'I'll make it no laughing matter to you,' cried Gill, wild with passion, and stepping to the door he cried out, 'Come up, boys, every man of ye: come up and see the chap that's trying to turn me out of my holding.'

The sound of voices and the tramp of feet outside now drew O'Shea to the window, and passing out on the balcony, he saw a considerable crowd of country-people assembled beneath. They were all armed with sticks, and had that look of mischief and daring so unmistakable in a mob. As the young man stood looking at them, some one pointed him out to the rest, and a wild yell, mingled with hisses, now broke from the crowd. He was turning away from the spot in disgust when he found that Gill had stationed himself at the window, and barred the passage.

'The boys want another look at ye,' said Gill insolently; 'go back and show yourself: it is not every day they see an informer.'

'Stand back, you old fool, and let me pass,' cried O'Shea.

'Touch me if you dare; only lay one finger on me in my own house,' said the fellow, and he grinned almost in his face as he spoke.

'Stand back,' said Gorman, and suiting the action to the word, he raised his arm to make space for him to pass out. Gill, no sooner did he feel the arm graze his chest, than he struck O'Shea across the face; and though the blow was that of an old man, the insult was so maddening that O'Shea, seizing him by the arms, dragged him out upon the balcony.

'He's going to throw the old man over,' cried several of those beneath, and amidst the tumult of voices, a number soon rushed up the stairs and out on the balcony, where the old fellow was clinging to O'Shea's legs in his despairing attempt to save himself. The struggle scarcely lasted many seconds, for the rotten woodwork of the balcony creaked and trembled, and at last gave way with a crash, bringing the whole party to the ground together.

A score of sticks rained their blows on the luckless young man, and each time that he tried to rise he was struck back and rolled over by a blow or a kick, till at length he lay still and senseless on the sward, his face covered with blood and his clothes in ribbons.

'Put him in a cart, boys, and take him off to the gaol,' said the attorney, M'Evoy. 'We'll be in a scrape about all this, if we don't make *him* in the wrong.'

His audience fully appreciated the counsel, and while a few were busied in carrying old Gill to the house—for a broken leg made him unable to reach it alone—the others placed O'Shea on some straw in a cart, and set out with him to Kilbeggan.

'It is not a trespass at all,' said M'Evoy. 'I'll make it a burglary and forcible entry, and if he recovers at all, I'll stake my reputation I transport him for seven years.'

A hearty murmur of approval met the speech, and the procession, with the cart at their head, moved on towards the town.

CHAPTER LV

TWO J.P.'S

It was the Tory magistrate, Mr. Flood—the same who had ransacked Walpole's correspondence—before whom the informations were sworn against Gorman O'Shea, and the old justice of the peace was, in secret, not sorry to see the question of land-

The balcony creaked and trembled, and at last gave way.

tenure a source of dispute and quarrel amongst the very party who were always inveighing against the landlords.

When Lord Kilgobbin arrived at Kilbeggan it was nigh midnight, and as young O'Shea was at that moment a patient in the gaol infirmary, and sound asleep, it was decided between Kearney and his son that they would leave him undisturbed till the following morning.

Late as it was, Kearney was so desirous to know the exact narrative of events that he resolved on seeing Mr. Flood at once. Though Dick Kearney remonstrated with his father, and reminded him that old Tom Flood, as he was called, was a bitter Tory, had neither a civil word nor a kind thought for his adversaries in politics, Kearney was determined not to be turned from his purpose by any personal consideration, and being assured by the innkeeper that he was sure to find Mr. Flood in his dining-room, and over his wine, he set out for the snug cottage at the entrance of the town, where the old justice of the peace resided.

Just as he had been told, Mr. Flood was still in the dinner-room, and with his guest, Tony Adams, the rector, seated with an array of decanters between them.

'Kearney—Kearney!' cried Flood, as he read the card the servant handed him. 'Is it the fellow who calls himself Lord Kilgobbin, I wonder?'

'Maybe so,' growled Adams, in a deep guttural, for he disliked the effort of speech.

'I don't know him, nor do I want to know him. He is one of your half-and-half Liberals that, to my thinking, are worse than the rebels themselves! What is this here in pencil on the back of the card? "Mr. K. begs to apologise for the hour of his intrusion, and earnestly entreats a few minutes from Mr. Flood." Show him in, Philip, show him in; and bring some fresh glasses.'

Kearney made his excuses with a tact and politeness which spoke of a time when he mixed freely with the world, and old Flood was so astonished by the ease and good-breeding of his visitor that his own manner became at once courteous and urbane.

'Make no apologies about the hour, Mr. Kearney,' said he. 'An old bachelor's house is never very tight in discipline. Allow me to introduce Mr. Adams, Mr. Kearney, the best preacher in Ireland, and as good a judge of port wine as of theology.'

The responsive grunt of the parson was drowned in the pleasant laugh of the others, as Kearney sat down and filled his glass. In a very few words he related the reason of his visit

to the town, and asked Mr. Flood to tell him what he knew of the late misadventure.

'Sworn information, drawn up by that worthy man, Pat M'Evoy, the greatest rascal in Europe, and I hope I don't hurt you by saying it, Mr. Kearney. Sworn information of a burglarious entry, and an aggravated assault on the premises and person of one Peter Gill, another local blessing—bad luck to him. The aforesaid—if I spoke of him before—Gorman O'Shea, having, *suadente diabolo*, smashed down doors and windows, palisadings and palings, and broke open cabinets, chests, cupboards, and other contrivances. In a word, he went into another man's house, and when asked what he did there, he threw the proprietor out of the window. There's the whole of it.'

'Where was the house?'

'O'Shea's Barn.'

'But surely O'Shea's Barn, being the residence and property of his aunt, there was no impropriety in his going there?'

'The informant states that the place was in the tenancy of this said Gill, one of your own people, Mr. Kearney. I wish you luck of him.'

'I disown him, root and branch; he is a disgrace to any side. And where is Miss Betty O'Shea?'

'In a convent or a monastery, they say. She has turned abbess or monk; but, upon my conscience, from the little I've seen of her, if a strong will and a plucky heart be the qualifications, she might be the Pope!'

'And are the young man's injuries serious? Is he badly hurt? for they would not let me see him at the gaol.'

'Serious, I believe they are. He is cut cruelly about the face and head, and his body bruised all over. The finest peasantry have a taste for kicking with strong brogues on them, Mr. Kearney, that cannot be equalled.'

'I wish with all my heart they'd kick the English out of Ireland!' cried Kearney, with a savage energy.

''Faith! if they go on governing us in the present fashion, I do not say I'll make any great objection. Eh, Adams?'

'Maybe so!' was the slow and very guttural reply, as the fat man crossed his hands on his waistcoat.

'I'm sick of them all, Whigs and Tories,' said Kearney.

'Is not every Irish gentleman sick of them, Mr. Kearney? Ain't you sick of being cheated and cajoled, and ain't *we* sick of being cheated and insulted? They seek to conciliate *you* by outraging *us*. Don't you think we could settle our own differences better amongst ourselves? It was Philpot Curran said of the

fleas in Manchester, that if they'd all pulled together, they'd have pulled him out of bed. Now, Mr. Kearney, what if we all took to "pulling together"?'

'We cannot get rid of the notion that we'd be out-jockeyed,' said Kearney slowly.

'We *know*,' cried the other, 'that we should be out-numbered, and that is worse. Eh, Adams?'

'Ay!' sighed Adams, who did not desire to be appealed to by either side.

'Now we're alone here, and no eavesdropper near us, tell me fairly, Kearney, are you better because we are brought down in the world? Are you richer—are you greater—are you happier?'

'I believe we are, Mr. Flood, and I'll tell you why I say so.'

'I'll be shot if I hear you, that's all. Fill your glass. That's old port that John Beresford tasted in the Custom-House Docks seventy-odd years ago, and you are the only Whig living that ever drank a drop of it!'

'I am proud to be the first exception, and I go so far as to believe—I shall not be the last!'

'I'll send a few bottles over to that boy in the infirmary. It cannot but be good for him,' said Flood.

'Take care, for Heaven's sake, if he be threatened with inflammation. Do nothing without the doctor's leave.'

'I wonder why the people who are so afraid of inflammation, are so fond of rebellion,' said he sarcastically.

'Perhaps I could tell you that, too——'

'No, do not—do not, I beseech you; reading the Whig Ministers' speeches has given me such a disgust to all explanations, I'd rather concede anything than hear how it could be defended! Apparently Mr. Disraeli is of my mind also, for he won't support Paul Hartigan's motion.'

'What was Hartigan's motion?'

'For the papers, or the correspondence, or whatever they called it, that passed between Danesbury and Dan Donogan.

'But there was none.'

'Is that all you know of it? They were as thick as two thieves. It was "Dear Dane" and Dear Dan" between them. "Stop the shooting. We want a light calendar at the summer assizes," says one. "You shall have forty thousand pounds yearly for a Catholic college, if the House will let us." "Thank you for nothing for the Catholic college," says Dan. "We want our own Parliament and our own militia; free pardon for political

offences." What would you say to a bill to make landlord-shooting manslaughter, Mr. Kearney?'

'Justifiable homicide, Mr. Bright called it years ago, but the judges didn't see it.'

'This Danesbury "muddle," for that is the name they give it, will be hushed up, for he has got some Tory connections, and the lords are never hard on one of their "order," so I hear. Hartigan is to be let have his talk out in the House, and as he is said to be violent and indiscreet, the Prime Minister will only reply to the violence and the indiscretion, and he will conclude by saying that the noble Viceroy has begged Her Majesty to release him of the charge of the Irish Government; and though the Cabinet have urgently entreated him to remain and carry out the wise policy of conciliation so happily begun in Ireland, he is rooted in his resolve, and he will not stay; and there will be cheers; and when he adds that Mr. Cecil Walpole, having shown his great talents for intrigue, will be sent back to the fitting sphere—his old profession of diplomacy—there will be laughter; for as the Minister seldom jokes, the House will imagine this to be a slip, and then, with every one in good humour—but Paul Hartigan, who will have to withdraw his motion—the right honourable gentleman will sit down, well pleased at his afternoon's work.'

Kearney could not but laugh at the sketch of a debate given with all the mimicry of tone and mock solemnity of an old debater, and the two men now became, by the bond of their geniality, like old acquaintances.

'Ah, Mr. Kearney, I won't say we'd do it better on College Green, but we'd do it more kindly, more courteously, and, above all, we'd be less hypocritical in our inquiries. I believe we try to cheat the devil in Ireland just as much as our neighbours. But we don't pretend that we are archbishops all the time we're doing it. There's where we differ from the English.'

'And who is to govern us,' cried Kearney, 'if we have no Lord-Lieutenant?'

'The Privy Council, the Lords Justices, or maybe the Board of Works, who knows? When you are going over to Holyhead in the packet, do you ever ask if the man at the wheel is decent, or a born idiot, and liable to fits? Not a bit of it. You know that there are other people to look to this, and you trust, besides, that they'll land you all safe.'

'That's true,' said Kearney, and he drained his glass; 'and now tell me one thing more. How will it go with young O'Shea about this scrimmage, will it be serious?'

'Curtis, the chief constable, says it will be an ugly affair

enough. They 'll swear hard, and they 'll try to make out a title to the land through the action of trespass; and if, as I hear, the young fellow is a scamp and a bad lot——'

'Neither one nor the other,' broke in Kearney; 'as fine a boy and as thorough a gentleman as there is in Ireland.'

'And a bit of a Fenian, too,' slowly interposed Flood.

'Not that I know; I'm not sure that he follows the distinctions of party here; he is little acquainted with Ireland.'

'Ho, ho! a Yankee sympathiser?'

'Not even that; an Austrian soldier, a young lieutenant of lancers over here for his leave.'

'And why couldn't he shoot, or course, or kiss the girls, or play at football, and not be burning his fingers with the new land-laws? There 's plenty of ways to amuse yourself in Ireland, without throwing a man out of window; eh, Adams?'

And Adams bowed his assent, but did not utter a word.

'You are not going to open more wine?' remonstrated Kearney eagerly.

'It 's done. Smell that, Mr. Kearney,' cried Flood, as he held out a fresh-drawn cork at the end of the screw. 'Talk to me of clove-pinks and violets and carnations after that? I don't know whether you have any prayers in your church against being led into temptation.'

'Haven't we?' sighed the other.

'Then all I say is, Heaven help the people of Oporto; they 'll have more to answer for even than most men.'

It was nigh dawn when they parted, Kearney muttering to himself as he sauntered back to the inn, 'If port like that is the drink of the Tories, they must be good fellows with all their prejudices.'

'I 'll be shot if I don't like that rebel,' said Flood as he went to bed.

CHAPTER LVI

BEFORE THE DOOR

Though Lord Kilgobbin, when he awoke somewhat late in the afternoon, did not exactly complain of headache, he was free to admit that his faculties were slightly clouded, and that his memory was not to the desired extent retentive of all that passed on the preceding night. Indeed, beyond the fact—which he reiterated with great energy—that 'old Flood, Tory though he

was, was a good fellow, an excellent fellow, and had a marvellous bin of port wine,' his son Dick was totally unable to get any information from him. 'Bigot, if you like, or Blue Protestant, and all the rest of it; but a fine hearty old soul, and an Irishman to the heart's core!' That was the sum of information which a two hours' close cross-examination elicited; and Dick was sulkily about to leave the room in blank disappointment when the old man suddenly amazed him by asking: 'And do you tell me that you have been lounging about the town all the morning and have learned nothing? Were you down to the gaol? Have you seen O'Shea? What's *his* account of it? Who began the row? Has he any bones broken? Do you know anything at all?' cried he, as the blank look of the astonished youth seemed to imply utter ignorance, as well as dismay.

'First of all,' said Dick, drawing a long breath, 'I have not seen O'Shea; nobody is admitted to see him. His injuries about the head are so severe the doctors are in dread of erysipelas.'

'What if he had? Have not every one of us had the erysipelas some time or other; and, barring the itching, what's the great harm?'

'The doctors declare that if it come, they will not answer for his life.'

'They know best, and I'm afraid they know why also. Oh dear, oh dear! if there's anything the world makes no progress in, it's the science of medicine. Everybody now dies of what we all used to have when I was a boy! Sore throats, smallpox, colic, are all fatal since they've found out Greek names for them, and with their old vulgar titles they killed nobody.'

'Gorman is certainly in a bad way, and Dr. Rogan says it will be some days before he could pronounce him out of danger.'

'Can he be removed? Can we take him back with us to Kilgobbin?'

'That is utterly out of the question; he cannot be stirred, and requires the most absolute rest and quiet. Besides that, there is another difficulty—I don't know if they would permit us to take him away.'

'What! do you mean, refuse our bail?'

'They have got affidavits to show old Gill's life's in danger; he is in high fever to-day, and raving furiously, and if he should die, M'Evoy declares that they'll be able to send bills for manslaughter, at least, before the grand-jury.'

'There's more of it!' cried Kilgobbin, with a long whistle. 'Is it Rogan swears the fellow is in danger?'

'No, it's Tom Price, the dispensary doctor; and as Miss Betty

withdrew her subscription last year, they say he swore he'd pay her off for it.'

'I know Tom, and I'll see to that,' said Kearney. 'Are the affidavits sworn?'

'No. They are drawn out; M'Evoy is copying them now; but they'll be ready by three o'clock.'

'I'll have Rogan to swear that the boy must be removed at once. We'll take him over with us; and once at Kilgobbin, they'll want a regiment of soldiers if they mean to take him. It is nigh twelve o'clock now, is it not?'

'It is on the stroke of two, sir.'

'Is it possible? I believe I overslept myself in the strange bed. Be alive now, Dick, and take the 2.40 train to town. Call on M'Keown, and find out where Miss Betty is stopping; break this business to her gently—for with all that damnable temper, she has a fine womanly heart—tell her the poor boy was not to blame at all: that he went over to see her, and knew nothing of the place being let out or hired; and tell her, besides, that the blackguards that beat him were not her own people at all, but villains from another barony that old Gill brought over to work on short wages. Mind that you say that, or we'll have more law, and more trouble—notices to quit, and the devil knows what. I know Miss Betty well, and she'd not leave a man on a town-land if they raised a finger against one of her name! There now, you know what to do: go and do it!'

To hear the systematic and peremptory manner in which the old man detailed all his directions, one would have pronounced him a model of orderly arrangement and rule. Having despatched Dick to town, however, he began to bethink him of all the matters on which he was desirous to learn Miss O'Shea's mind. Had she really leased the Barn to this man Gill: and if so, for what term? And was her quarrel with her nephew of so serious a nature that she might hesitate as to taking his side here—at least, till she knew he was in the right; and then, was he in the right? That was, though the last, the most vital consideration of all.

'I'd have thought of all these if the boy had not flurried me so. These hot-headed fellows have never room in their foolish brains for anything like consecutive thought; they can just entertain the one idea, and till they dismiss that, they cannot admit another. Now, he'll come back by the next train, and bring me the answer to one of my queries, if even that!' sighed he, as he went on with his dressing.

'All this blessed business,' muttered he to himself, 'comes of this blundering interference with the land-laws. Paddy hears

that they have given him some new rights and privileges, and no mock-modesty of his own will let him lose any of them, and so he claims everything. Old experience had taught him that with a bold heart and a blunderbuss he need not pay much rent; but Mr. Gladstone—long life to him—had said, "We must do something for you." Now what could that be? He'd scarcely go so far as to give them out Minié rifles or Chassepots, though arms of precision, as they call them, would have put many a poor fellow out of pain—as Bob Magrath said when he limped into the public-house with a ball in his back—"It's only a 'healing measure,' don't make a fuss about it."'

'Mr. Flood wants to see your honour when you're dressed,' said the waiter, interrupting his soliloquy.

'Where is he?'

'Walking up and down, sir, forenent the door.'

'Will ye say I'm coming down? I'm just finishing a letter to the Lord-Lieutenant,' said Kilgobbin, with a sly look to the man, who returned the glance with its rival, and then left the room.

'Will you not come in and sit down?' said Kearney, as he cordially shook Flood's hand.

'I have only five minutes to stay, and with your leave, Mr. Kearney, we'll pass it here'; and taking the other's arm, he proceeded to walk up and down before the door of the inn.

'You know Ireland well—few men better, I am told—and you have no need, therefore, to be told how the rumoured dislikes of party, the reported jealousies and rancours of this set to that, influence the world here. It will be a fine thing, therefore, to show these people here that the Liberal, Mr. Kearney, and that bigoted old Tory, Tom Flood, were to be seen walking together, and in close confab. It will show them, at all events, that neither of us wants to make party capital out of this scrimmage, and that he who wants to affront one of us, cannot, on that ground, at least, count upon the other. Just look at the crowd that is watching us already! There's a fellow neglecting the sale of his pig to stare at us, and that young woman has stopped gartering her stocking for the last two minutes in sheer curiosity about us.'

Kearney laughed heartily as he nodded assent.

'You follow me, don't you?' asked Flood. 'Well, then, grant me the favour I'm about to ask, and it will show me that you see all these things as I do. This row may turn out more seriously than we thought for. That scoundrel Gill is in a high fever to-day—I would not say that just out of spite the fellow

'Just look at the crowd that is watching us already.'

would not die. Who knows if it may not become a great case at the assizes; and if so, Kearney, let us have public opinion with us. There are scores of men who will wait to hear what you and I say of this business. There are hundreds more who will expect us to disagree. Let us prove to them that this is no feud between Orange and Green, this is nothing of dispute between Whig and Tory, or Protestant and Papist; but a free fight, where, more shame to them, fifty fell upon one. Now what you must grant me is leave to send this boy back to Kilgobbin in my own carriage, and with my own liveries. There is not a peasant cutting turf on the bog will not reason out his own conclusions when he sees it. Don't refuse me, for I have set my heart on it.'

'I'm not thinking of refusing. I was only wondering to myself what my daughter Kitty will say when she sees me sitting behind the blue and orange liveries.'

'You may send me back with the green flag over me the next day I dine with you,' cried Flood, and the compact was ratified.

'It is more than half-past already,' said Flood. 'We are to have a full bench at three; so be ready to give your bail, and I'll have the carriage at the corner of the street, and you shall set off with the boy at once.'

'I must say,' said Kearney, 'whatever be your Tory faults, lukewarmness is not one of them! You stand to me like an old friend in all this trouble.'

'Maybe it's time to begin to forget old grudges. Kearney, I believe in my heart neither of us is as bad as the other thinks him. Are you aware that they are getting affidavits to refuse the bail?'

'I know it all; but I have sent a man to M'Evoy about a case that will take all his morning; and he'll be too late with his affidavits.'

'By the time he is ready, you and your charge will be snug in Kilgobbin; and another thing, Kearney—for I have thought of the whole matter—you'll take out with you that little vermin Price, the doctor, and treat him well. He'll be as indiscreet as you wish, and be sure to give him the opportunity. There, now, give me your most affectionate grasp of the hand, for there's an attentive public watching us.'

CHAPTER LVII

A DOCTOR

Young O'Shea made the journey from Kilbeggan to Kilgobbin Castle in total unconsciousness. The symptoms had now taken the form which doctors call concussion; and though to a first brief question he was able to reply reasonably and well, the effort seemed so exhausting that to all subsequent queries he appeared utterly indifferent; nor did he even by look acknowledge that he heard them.

Perfect and unbroken quiet was enjoined as his best, if not his only, remedy; and Kate gave up her own room for the sick man, as that most remote from all possible disturbance, and away from all the bustle of the house. The doctors consulted on his case in the fashion that a country physician of eminence condescends to consult with a small local practitioner. Dr. Rogan pronounced his opinion, prophetically declared the patient in danger, and prescribed his remedies, while Price, agreeing with everything, and even slavishly abject in his manner of concurrence, went about amongst the underlings of the household saying, 'There's two fractures of the frontal bone. It's trepanned he ought to be; and when there's an inquest on the body, I'll declare I said so.'

Though nearly all the care of providing for the sick man's nursing fell to Kate Kearney, she fulfilled the duty without attracting any notice whatever, or appearing to feel as if any extra demand were made upon her time or her attention; so much so, that a careless observer might have thought her far more interested in providing for the reception of the aunt than in cares for the nephew.

Dick Kearney had written to say that Miss Betty was so overwhelmed with affliction at young Gorman's mishap that she had taken to bed, and could not be expected to be able to travel for several days. She insisted, however, on two telegrams daily to report on the boy's case, and asked which of the great Dublin celebrities of physic should be sent down to see him.

'They're all alike to me,' said Kilgobbin; 'but if I was to choose, I think I'd say Dr. Chute.'

This was so far unlucky, since Dr. Chute had then been dead about forty years; scarcely a junior of the profession having so much as heard his name.

'We really want no one,' said Rogan. 'We are doing most favourably in every respect. If one of the young ladies would sit and read to him, but not converse, it would be a service. He made the request himself this morning, and I promised to repeat it.'

A telegram, however, announced that Sir St. Xavier Brennan would arrive the same evening, and as Sir X. was physician-in-chief to the nuns of the Bleeding Heart, there could be little doubt whose orthodoxy had chosen him.

He came at nightfall — a fat, comely-looking, somewhat unctuous gentleman, with excellent teeth and snow-white hands, symmetrical and dimpled like a woman's. He saw the patient, questioned him slightly, and divined without waiting for it what the answer should be; he was delighted with Rogan, pleased with Price, but he grew actually enthusiastic over those charming nurses, Nina and Kate.

'With such sisters of charity to tend me, I'd consent to pass my life as an invalid,' cried he.

Indeed, to listen to him, it would seem that, whether from the salubrity of the air, the peaceful quietude of the spot, the watchful kindness and attention of the surrounders, or a certain general air—an actual atmosphere of benevolence and contentment around—there was no pleasure of life could equal the delight of being laid up at Kilgobbin.

'I have a message for you from my old friend Miss O'Shea,' said he to Kate the first moment he had the opportunity of speaking with her alone. 'It is not necessary to tell you that I neither know, nor desire to know, its import. Her words were these: "Tell my godchild to forgive me if she still has any memory for some very rude words I once spoke. Tell her that I have been sorely punished for them since, and that till I know I have her pardon, I have no courage to cross her doors." This was my message, and I was to bring back your answer.'

'Tell her,' cried Kate warmly, 'I have no place in my memory but for the kindnesses she has bestowed on me, and that I ask no better boon from Fortune than to be allowed to love her, and to be worthy of her love.'

'I will repeat every word you have told me; and I am proud to be bearer of such a speech. May I presume, upon the casual confidence I have thus acquired, to add one word for myself; and it is as the doctor I would speak.'

'Speak freely. What is it?'

'It is this, then: you young ladies keep your watches in turn in the sick-room. The patient is unfit for much excitement, and as I dare not take the liberty of imposing a line of conduct on

Mademoiselle Kostalergi, I have resolved to run the hazard with *you*! Let *hers* be the task of entertaining him; let *her* be the reader—and he loves being read to—and the talker, and the narrator of whatever goes on. To you be the part of quiet watchfulness and care, to bathe the heated brow, or the burning hand, to hold the cold cup to the parched lips, to adjust the pillow, to temper the light, and renew the air of the sick-room, but to speak seldom, if at all. Do you understand me?'

'Perfectly; and you are wise and acute in your distribution of labour: each of us has her fitting station.'

'I dared not have said this much to *her*: my doctor's instinct told me I might be frank with *you*.'

'You are safe in speaking to me,' said she calmly.

'Perhaps I ought to say that I give these suggestions without any concert with my patient. I have not only abstained from consulting, but——'

'Forgive my interrupting you, Sir X. It was quite unnecessary to tell me this.'

'You are not displeased with me, dear lady?' said he, in his softest of accents.

'No; but do not say anything which might make me so.'

The doctor bowed reverentially, crossed his white hands on his waistcoat, and looked like a saint ready for martyrdom.

Kate frankly held out her hand in token of perfect cordiality, and her honest smile suited the action well.

'Tell Miss Betty that our sick charge shall not be neglected, but that we want her here herself to help us.'

'I shall report your message word for word,' said he, as he withdrew.

As the doctor drove back to Dublin, he went over a variety of things in his thoughts. There were serious disturbances in the provinces; those ugly outrages which forerun long winter nights, and make the last days of October dreary and sad-coloured. Disorder and lawlessness were abroad; and that want of something remedial to be done which, like the thirst in fever, is fostered and fed by partial indulgence. Then he had some puzzling cases in hospital, and one or two in private practice, which harassed him; for some had reached that critical stage where a false move would be fatal, and it was far from clear which path should be taken. Then there was that matter of Miss O'Shea herself, who, if her nephew were to die, would most likely endow that hospital in connection with the Bleeding Heart, and of which he was himself the founder; and that this fate was by no means improbable, Sir X. persuaded himself, as he counted

over all the different stages of peril that stood between him and convalescence. 'We have now the concussion, with reasonable prospect of meningitis; and there may come on erysipelas from the scalp wounds, and high fever, with all its dangers; next there may be a low typhoid state, with high nervous excitement; and through all these the passing risks of the wrong food or drink, the imprudent revelations, or the mistaken stimulants. Heigh-ho!' said he at last, 'we come through storm and shipwreck, forlorn-hopes, and burning villages, and we succumb to ten drops too much of a dark-brown liquor, or the improvident rashness that reads out a note to us incautiously!

'Those young ladies thought to mystify me,' said he aloud, after a long reverie. 'I was not to know which of them was in love with the sick boy. I could make nothing of the Greek, I own, for, except a half-stealthy regard for myself, she confessed to nothing, and the other was nearly as inscrutable. It was only the little warmth at last that betrayed her. I hurt her pride, and as she winced, I said, "There's the sore spot—there's mischief there!" How the people grope their way through life who have never studied physic nor learned physiology is a puzzle to *me*! With all its aid and guidance I find humanity quite hard enough to understand every day I live.'

Even in his few hours' visit—in which he remarked everything, from the dress of the man who waited at dinner, to the sherry decanter with the smashed stopper, the weak 'Gladstone' that did duty as claret, and the cotton lace which Nina sported as 'point d'Alençon,' and numberless other shifts, such as people make who like to play false money with Fortune—all these he saw, and he saw that a certain jealous rivalry existed between the two girls; but whether either of them, or both, cared for young O'Shea, he could not declare; and, strange as it may seem, his inability to determine this weighed upon him with all the sense of a defeat.

CHAPTER LVIII

IN TURKEY

Leaving the sick man to the tender care of those ladies whose division of labour we have just hinted at, we turn to other interests, and to one of our characters, who, though to all seeming neglected, has not lapsed from our memory.

Joe Atlee had been despatched on a very confidential mission

by Lord Danesbury. Not only was he to repossess himself of certain papers he had never heard of, from a man he had never seen, but he was also to impress this unknown individual with the immense sense of fidelity to another who no longer had any power to reward him, and besides this, to persuade him, being a Greek, that the favour of a great ambassador of England was better than roubles of gold and vases of malachite.

Modern history has shown us what a great aid to success in life is the contribution of a 'light heart,' and Joe Atlee certainly brought this element of victory along with him on his journey.

His instructions were assuredly of the roughest. To impress Lord Danesbury favourably on the score of his acuteness he must not press for details, seek for explanations, and, above all, he must ask no questions. In fact, to accomplish that victory which he ambitioned for his cleverness, and on which his Excellency should say, 'Atlee saw it at once—Atlee caught the whole thing at a glance,' Joe must be satisfied with the least definite directions that ever were issued, and the most confused statement of duties and difficulties that ever puzzled a human intelligence. Indeed, as he himself summed up his instructions in his own room, they went no further than this: That there was a Greek, who, with a number of other names, was occasionally called Speridionides—a great scoundrel, and with every good reason for not being come at—who was to be found somewhere in Stamboul —probably at the bazaar at nightfall. He was to be bullied, or bribed, or wheedled, or menaced, to give up some letters which Lord Danesbury had once written to him, and to pledge himself to complete secrecy as to their contents ever after. From this Greek, whose perfect confidence Atlee was to obtain, he was to learn whether Kulbash Pasha, Lord Danesbury's sworn friend and ally, was not lapsing from his English alliance and inclining towards Russian connections. To Kulbash himself Atlee had letters accrediting him as the trusted and confidential agent of Lord Danesbury, and with the Pasha, Joe was instructed to treat with an air and bearing of unlimited trustfulness. He was also to mention that his Excellency was eager to be back at his old post as ambassador, that he loved the country, the climate, his old colleagues in the Sultan's service, and all the interests and questions that made up their political life.

Last of all, Atlee was to ascertain every point on which any successor to Lord Danesbury was likely to be mistaken, and how a misconception might be ingeniously widened into a grave blunder; and by what means such incidents should be properly commented on by the local papers, and unfavourable comparisons

drawn between the author of these measures and 'the great and enlightened statesman' who had so lately left them.

In a word, Atlee saw that he was to personate the character of a most unsuspecting, confiding young gentleman, who possessed a certain natural aptitude for affairs of importance, and that amount of discretion such as suited him to be employed confidentially; and to perform this part he addressed himself.

The Pasha liked him so much that he invited him to be his guest while he remained at Constantinople, and soon satisfied that he was a guileless youth fresh to the world and its ways, he talked very freely before him, and affecting to discuss mere possibilities, actually sketched events and consequences which Atlee shrewdly guessed to be all within the range of casualties.

Lord Danesbury's post at Constantinople had not been filled up, except by the appointment of a Chargé-d'Affaires; it being one of the approved modes of snubbing a government to accredit a person of inferior rank to its court. Lord Danesbury detested this man with a hate that only official life comprehends, the mingled rancour, jealousy, and malice suggested by a successor, being a combination only known to men who serve their country.

'Find out what Brumsey is doing; he is said to be doing wrong. He knows nothing of Turkey. Learn his blunders, and let me know them.'

This was the easiest of all Atlee's missions, for Brumsey was the weakest and most transparent of all imbecile Whigs. A junior diplomatist of small faculties and great ambitions, he wanted to do something, not being clear as to what, which should startle his chiefs, and make 'the Office' exclaim: 'See what Sam Brumsey has been doing! Hasn't Brumsey hit the nail on the head! Brumsey's last despatch is the finest state-paper since the days of Canning!' Now no one knew the short range of this man's intellectual tether better than Lord Danesbury—since Brumsey had been his own private secretary once, and the two men hated each other as only a haughty superior and a craven dependant know how to hate.

The old ambassador was right. Russian craft had dug many a pitfall for the English diplomatist, and Brumsey had fallen into every one of them. Acting on secret information—all ingeniously prepared to entrap him—Brumsey had discovered a secret demand made by Russia to enable one of the imperial family to make the tour of the Black Sea with a ship-of-war. Though it might be matter of controversy whether Turkey herself could, without the assent of the other Powers to the Treaty of Paris, give her permission, Brumsey was too elated by his discovery to hesitate

about this, but at once communicated to the Grand-Vizier a formal declaration of the displeasure with which England would witness such an infraction of a solemn engagement.

As no such project had ever been entertained, no such demand ever made, Kulbash Pasha not only laughed heartily at the mock-thunder of the Englishman, but at the energy with which a small official always opens fire, and in the jocularity of his Turkish nature—for they are jocular, these children of the Koran—he told the whole incident to Atlee.

'Your old master, Mr. Atlee,' said he, 'would scarcely have read us so sharp a lesson as that; but,' he added, 'we always hear stronger language from the man who couldn't station a gunboat at Pera than from the ambassador who could call up the Mediterranean squadron from Malta.'

If Atlee's first letter to Lord Danesbury admitted of a certain disappointment as regarded Speridionides, it made ample compensation by the keen sketch it conveyed of how matters stood at the Porte, the uncertain fate of Kulbash Pasha's policy, and the scarcely credible blunder of Brumsey.

To tell the English ambassador how much he was regretted and how much needed, how the partisans of England felt themselves deserted and abandoned by his withdrawal, and how gravely the best interests of Turkey itself were compromised for want of that statesmanlike intelligence that had up to this guided the counsels of the Divan: all these formed only a part of Atlee's task, for he wrote letters and leaders, in this sense, to all the great journals of London, Paris, and Vienna; so that when the *Times* and the *Post* asked the English people whether they were satisfied that the benefit of the Crimean War should be frittered away by an incompetent youth in the position of a man of high ability, the *Débats* commented on the want of support France suffered at the Porte by the inferior agency of England, and the *Neue Presse* of Vienna more openly declared that if England had determined to annex Turkey and govern it as a crown colony, it would have been at least courtesy to have informed her co-signatories of the fact.

At the same time, an Irish paper in the National interest quietly desired to be informed how was it that the man who made such a mull of Ireland could be so much needed in Turkey, aided by a well-known fellow-citizen, more celebrated for smashing lamps and wringing off knockers than for administering the rights of a colony; and by which of his services, ballad-writing or beating the police, he had gained the favour of the present Cabinet. 'In fact,' concluded the writer, 'if we hear more of

this appointment, we promise our readers some biographical memoirs of the respected individual, which may serve to show the rising youth of Ireland by what gifts success in life is most surely achieved, as well as what peculiar accomplishments find most merit with the grave-minded men who rule us.'

A Cork paper announced on the same day, amongst the promotions, that Joseph Atlee had been made C.B., and mildly inquired if the honour were bestowed for that paper on Ireland in the last *Quarterly*, and dryly wound up by saying, 'We are not selfish, whatever people may say of us. Our friends on the Bosporus shall have the noble lord cheap! Let his Excellency only assure us that he will return with his whole staff, and not leave us Mr. Cecil Walpole, or any other like incapacity, behind him, as a director of the Poor-Law Board, or inspector-general of gaols, or deputy-assistant-secretary anywhere, and we assent freely to the change that sends this man to the East and leaves us here to flounder on with such aids to our mistakes as a Liberal Government can safely afford to spare us.'

A paragraph in another part of the same paper, which asked if the Joseph Atlee who, it was rumoured, was to go out as Governor to Labuan, could be this man, had, it is needless to say, been written by himself.

The *Levant Herald* contented itself with an authorised contradiction to the report that Sir Joseph Atlee—the Sir was an ingenious blunder—had conformed to Islamism, and was in treaty for the palace of Tashkir Bey at Therapia.

With a neatness and tact all his own, Atlee narrated Brumsey's blunder in a tone so simple and almost deferential, that Lord Danesbury could show the letter to any of his colleagues. The whole spirit of the document was regret that a very well-intentioned gentleman of good connections and irreproachable morals should be an ass! Not that he employed the insufferable designation.

The Cabinet at home were on thorns lest the press—the vile Tory organs—should get wind of the case and cap the blundering government of Ireland with the almost equally gross mistake in diplomacy.

'We shall have the *Standard* at us,' said the Premier.

'Far worse,' replied the Foreign Secretary. 'I shall have Brunow here in a white passion to demand an apology and the recall of our man at Constantinople.'

To accuse a well-known housebreaker of a burglary that he had not committed, nor had any immediate thought of committing, is the very luckiest stroke of fortune that could befall him. He

comes out not alone innocent, but injured. The persecutions by which bad men have assailed him for years have at last their illustration, and the calumniated saint walks forth into the world, his head high and his port erect, even though a crowbar should peep out from his coat-pocket and the jingle of false keys go with him as he went.

Far too astute to make the scandal public by the newspapers, Atlee only hinted to his chief the danger that might ensue if the secret leaked out. He well knew that a press scandal is a nine-day fever, but a menaced publicity is a chronic malady that may go on for years.

The last lines of his letter were: 'I have made a curious and interesting acquaintance—a certain Stephanotis Bey, governor of Scutari in Albania, a very venerable old fellow, who was never at Constantinople till now. The Pasha tells me in confidence that he is enormously wealthy. His fortune was made by brigandage in Greece, from which he retired a few years ago, shocked by the sudden death of his brother, who was decapitated at Corinth with five others. The Bey is a nice, gentle-mannered, simple-hearted old man, kind to the poor, and eminently hospitable. He has invited me down to Prevesa for the pig-shooting. If I have your permission to accept the invitation, I shall make a rapid visit to Athens, and make one more effort to discover Speridionides. Might I ask the favour of an answer by telegraph? So many documents and archives were stolen here at the time of the fire of the Embassy, that, by a timely measure of discredit, we can impair the value of all papers whatever, and I have already a mass of false despatches, notes, and telegrams ready for publication, and subsequent denial, if you advise it. In one of these I have imitated Walpole's style so well that I scarcely think he will read it without misgivings. With so much "bad bank paper" in circulation, Speridionides is not likely to set a high price on his own scrip."'

CHAPTER LIX

A LETTER-BAG

Lord Danesbury read Atlee's letter with an enjoyment not unlike the feeling an old sportsman experiences in discovering that his cover hack—an animal not worth twenty pounds—was a capital fencer; that a beast only destined to the commonest of

uses should actually have qualities that recalled the steeplechaser —that the scrubby little creature with the thin neck and the shabby quarters should have a turn of speed and a 'big jump' in him, was something scarcely credible, and highly interesting.

Now political life has its handicaps like the turf, and that old jockey of many Cabinets began seriously to think whether he might not lay a little money on that dark horse Joe Atlee, and make something out of him before he was better known in 'the ring.'

He was smarting, besides, under the annoyances of that half-clever fellow Walpole, when Atlee's letter reached him, and though the unlucky Cecil had taken ill and kept his room ever since his arrival, his Excellency had never forgiven him, nor by a word or sign showed any disposition to restore him to favour.

That he was himself overwhelmed by a correspondence, and left to deal with it almost alone, scarcely contributed to reconcile him to a youth who was not really ill, but smarting, as he deemed it, under a recent defeat; and he pointed to the mass of papers which now littered his breakfast-table, and querulously asked his niece if that brilliant young gentleman upstairs could be induced to postpone his sorrows and copy a despatch.

'If it be not something very difficult or requiring very uncommon care, perhaps I could do it myself.'

'So you could, Maude, but I want you too—I shall want you to copy out parts of Atlee's last letter, which I wish to place before the Foreign Office Secretary. He ought to see what his protégé Brumsey is making of it. These are the idiots who get us into foreign wars, or those apologetic movements in diplomacy, which are as bad as lost battles. What a contrast to Atlee—a rare clever dog, Atlee—and so awake, not only to one, but to every contingency of a case. I like that fellow—I like a fellow that stops all the earths! Your half-clever ones never do that; they only do enough to prolong the race; they don't win it. That bright relative of ours—Cecil—is one of those. Give Atlee Walpole's chances, and where would he be?'

A very faint colour tinged her cheek as she listened, but did not speak.

'That's the real way to put it,' continued he, more warmly. 'Say to Atlee, "You shall enter public life without any pressing need to take office for a livelihood; you shall have friends able to push you with one party, and relations and connections with the Opposition, to save you from unnecessary cavil or question; you shall be well introduced socially, and have a seat in the House before——" What's his age? five-and-twenty?'

'I should say about three-and-twenty, my lord; but it is a mere guess.'

'Three-and-twenty is he? I suspect you are right—he can't be more. But what a deal the fellow has crammed for that time—plenty of rubbish, no doubt: old dramatists and such like; but he is well up in his treaties; and there's not a speaker of eminence in the House that he cannot make contradict himself out of Hansard.'

'Has he any fortune?' sighed she, so lazily that it scarcely sounded as a question.

'I suppose not.'

'Nor any family?'

'Brothers and sisters he may have—indeed, he is sure to have; but if you mean connections—belonging to persons of admitted station—of course he has not. The name alone might show it.'

Another little sigh, fainter than before, followed, and all was still.

'Five years hence, if even so much, the plebeian name and the unknown stock will be in his favour; but we have to wade through a few dreary measures before that. I wish he was in the House—he ought to be in the House.'

'Is there a vacancy?' said she lazily.

'Two. There is Cradford, and there is that Scotch place—the something-Burg, which, of course, one of their own people will insist on.'

'Couldn't he have Cradford?' asked she, with a very slight animation.

'He might—at least if Brand knew him, he'd see he was the man they wanted. I almost think I'll write a line to Brand, and send him some extracts of the last letter. I will—here goes.'

'If you'll tell me——'

'Dear B.,—Read the inclosed, and say have you anybody better than the writer for your ancient borough of Cradford? The fellow can talk, and I am sure he can speak as well as he writes. He is well up in all Irish press iniquities. Better than all, he has neither prejudices nor principles, nor, as I believe, a five-pound note in the world. He is now in Greece, but I'll have him over by telegraph if you give me encouragement.

'Tell Tycross at F. O. to send Walpole to Guatemala, and order him to his post at once. G. will have told you that I shall not go back to Ireland. The blunder of my ever seeing it was the blackest in the life of yours, Danesbury.'

The first letter his lordship opened gave him very little time or inclination to bestow more thought on Atlee. It was from the head of the Cabinet, and in the coldest tone imaginable. The writer directed his attention to what had occurred in the House the night before, and how impossible it was for any Government to depend on colleagues whose administration had been so palpably blundering and unwise. 'Conciliation can only succeed by the good faith it inspires. Once that it leaks out you are more eager to achieve a gain than confer a benefit, you cease to conciliate, and you only cajole. Now your lordship might have apprehended that, in this especial game, the Popish priest is your master and mine—not to add that he gives an undivided attention to a subject which we have to treat as one amongst many, and with the relations and bearings which attach it to other questions of state.

'That you cannot with advantage to the Crown, or, indeed, to your own dignity, continue to hold your present office, is clear enough; and the only question now is in what way, consistent with the safety of the Administration, and respect for your lordship's high character, the relinquishment had best be made. The debate has been, on Gregory's motion, adjourned. It will be continued on Tuesday, and my colleagues opine that if your resignation was in their hands before that day, certain leaders of the Opposition would consent to withdraw their motion. I am not wholly agreed with the other members of the Cabinet on this point; but, without embarrassing you by the reasons which sway my judgment, I will simply place the matter before you for your own consideration, perfectly assured, as I am, that your decision will be come to only on consideration of what you deem best for the interests of the country.

'My colleague at the Foreign Office will write to-day or to-morrow with reference to your former post, and I only allude to it now to say the unmixed satisfaction it would give the Cabinet to find that the greatest interests of Eastern Europe were once more in the keeping of the ablest diplomatist of the age, and one of the most far-sighted of modern statesmen.

'A motion for the abolition of the Irish viceroyalty is now on the notice paper, and it will be matter for consideration whether we may not make it an open question in the Cabinet. Perhaps your lordship would favour me with such opinions on the subject as your experiences suggest.

'The extra session has wearied out every one, and we can with difficulty make a House.—Yours sincerely,

G. Annivey.'

The next he opened was briefer. It ran thus:—

'Dear Danesbury,—You must go back at once to Turkey. That inscrutable idiot Brumsey has discovered another mare's-nest, and we are lucky if Gortchakoff does not call upon us for public apology. Brunow is outrageous and demands B.'s recall. I sent off the despatch while he was with me. Leflo Pasha is very ill, they say dying, so that you must haste back to your old friend (query: which is he?) Kulbash, if it be not too late, as Apponyi thinks.—Yours, G.

'P.S.—Take none of your Irish suite with you to the East. The papers are sure to note the names and attack you if you should. They shall be cared for somehow, if there be any who interest you.

'You have seen that the House was not over civil to you on Saturday night, though A. thinks you got off well.'

'Resign!' cried he aloud, as he dashed the letter on the table. 'I think I would resign! If they asked what would tempt me to go back there, I should be sorely puzzled to name it. No; not the blue ribbon itself would induce me to face that chaos once more. As to the hint about my Irish staff, it was quite unnecessary. Not very likely, Maude, we should take Walpole to finish in the Bosporus what he has begun on the Liffey.'

He turned hastily to the *Times*, and threw his eyes over the summary of the debate. It was acrimonious and sneery. The Opposition leaders, with accustomed smoothness, had made it appear that the Viceroy's Eastern experience had misled him, and that he thought 'Tipperary was a Pashalick!' Imbued with notions of wholesale measures of government, so applicable to Turkey, it was easy to see how the errors had affected his Irish policy. 'There was,' said the speaker, 'somebody to be conciliated in Ireland, and some one to be hanged; and what more natural than that he should forget which, or that he should make the mistake of keeping all the flattery for the rebel and the rope for the priest.' The neatness of the illustration took with the House, and the speaker was interrupted by 'much laughter.' And then he went on to say that, 'as with those well-known ointments or medicines whose specific virtues lay in the enormous costliness of some of the constituents, so it must give unspeakable value to the efficacy of those healing measures for Ireland, to know that the whole British Constitution was boiled down to make one of them, and every right and liberty brayed in the

mortar to furnish even one dose of this precious elixir.' And then there was 'laughter' again.

'He ought to be more merciful to charlatans. Dogs do not eat dogs,' muttered his lordship to himself, and then asked his niece to send Walpole to him.

It was some time before Walpole appeared, and when he did, it was with such a wasted look and careworn aspect as might have pleaded in his favour.

'Maude told me you wished to see me, my lord,' said he, half diffidently.

'Did I? eh? Did I say so? I forget all about it. What could it be? Let us see. Was it this stupid row they were making in the House? Have you read the debate?'

'No, my lord; not looked at a paper.'

'Of course not; you have been too ill, too weak. Have you seen a doctor?'

'I don't care to see a doctor; they all say the same thing. I only need rest and quiet.'

'Only that! Why, they are the two things nobody can get. Power cannot have them, nor money buy them. The retired tradesman—I beg his pardon, the cheesemonger—he is always a cheesemonger now who represents vulgarity and bank-stock—he may have his rest and quiet; but a Minister must not dream of such a luxury, nor any one who serves a minister. Where 's the quiet to come from, I ask you, after such a tirade of abuse as that?' And he pointed to the *Times*. 'There 's *Punch*, too, with a picture of me measuring out "Danesbury's drops to cure loyalty." That slim youth handing the spoon is meant for *you*, Walpole.'

'Perhaps so, my lord,' said he coldly.

'They haven't given you too much leg, Cecil,' said the other, laughing; but Cecil scarcely relished the joke.

'I say, Piccadilly is scarcely the place for a man after that: I mean, of course, for a while,' continued he. 'These things are not eternal; they have their day. They had me last week travelling in Ireland on a camel; and I was made to say, "That the air of the desert always did me good!" Poor fun, was it not?'

'Very poor fun indeed!'

'And you were the boy preparing my chibouque; and, I must say, devilish like.'

'I did not see it, my lord.'

'That 's the best way. Don't look at the caricatures; don't read the *Saturday Review*; never know there is anything wrong with you; nor, if you can, that anything disagrees with you.'

'I should like the last delusion best of all,' said he.

'Who would not?' cried the old lord. 'The way I used to eat potted prawns at Eton, and peach jam after them, and iced guavas, and never felt better! And now everything gives acidity.'

'Just because our fathers and grandfathers would have those potted prawns you spoke of.'

'No, no; you are all wrong. It's the new race—it's the new generation. They don't bear reverses. Whenever the world goes wrong with them, they talk as they feel, they lose appetite, and they fall down in a state like your—a—Walpole—like your own!'

'Well, my lord, I don't think I could be called captious for saying that the world has not gone over well with me.'

'Ah—hum. You mean—no matter—I suppose the luckiest hand is not all trumps! The thing is to score the trick—that's the point, Walpole, to score the trick!'

'Up to this, I have not been so fortunate.'

'Well, who knows what's coming! I have just asked the Foreign Office people to give you Guatemala; not a bad thing, as times go.'

'Why, my lord, it's banishment and barbarism together. The pay is miserable! It *is* far away, and it *is* not Pall Mall or the Rue Rivoli.'

'No, not that. There is twelve hundred for salary, and something for a house, and something more for a secretary that you don't keep, and an office that you need not have. In fact, it makes more than two thousand; and for a single man in a place where he cannot be extravagant, it will suffice.'

'Yes, my lord; but I was presumptuous enough to imagine a condition in which I should not be a single man, and I speculated on the possibility that another might venture to share even poverty as my companion.'

'A woman wouldn't go there—at least, she ought not. It's all bush life, or something like it. Why should a woman bear that? or a man ask her to do so?'

'You seem to forget, my lord, that affections may be engaged, and pledges interchanged.'

'Get a bill of indemnity, therefore, to release you: better that than wait for yellow fever to do it.'

'I confess that your lordship's words give me great discouragement, and if I could possibly believe that Lady Maude was of your mind——'

'Maude! Maude! why, you never imagined that Lady Maude would leave comfort and civilisation for this bush life, with its rancheros and rattlesnakes. I confess,' said he, with a bitter

laugh, 'I did not think either of you were bent on being Paul or Virginia.'

'Have I your lordship's permission to ask her own judgment in the matter: I mean with the assurance of its not being biassed by you?'

'Freely, most freely do I give it. She is not the girl I believe her if she leaves you long in doubt. But I prejudge nothing, and I influence nothing.'

'Am I to conclude, my lord, that I am sure of this appointment?'

'I almost believe I can say you are. I have asked for a reply by telegraph, and I shall probably have one to-morrow.'

'You seem to have acted under the conviction that I should be glad to get this place.'

'Yes, such was my conclusion. After that fiasco in Ireland you must go somewhere, for a time at least, out of the way. Now as a man cannot die for half a dozen years and come back to life when people have forgotten his unpopularity, the next best thing is South America. Bogota and the Argentine Republic have whitewashed many a reputation.'

'I will remember your lordship's wise words.'

'Do so,' said my lord curtly, for he felt offended at the flippant tone in which the other spoke. 'I don't mean to say that I'd send the writer of that letter yonder to Yucatan or Costa Rica.'

'Who may the gifted writer be, my lord?'

'Atlee, Joe Atlee; the fellow you sent over here.'

'Indeed!' was all that Walpole could utter.

'Just take it to your room and read it over. You will be astonished at the thing. The fellow has got to know the bearings of a whole set of new questions, and how he understands the men he has got to deal with!'

'With your leave I will do so,' said he, as he took the letter and left the room.

CHAPTER LX

A DEFEAT

Cecil Walpole's Italian experiences had supplied him with an Italian proverb which says, '*Tutto il mal non vien per nuocere*,' or, in other words, that no evil comes unmixed with good; and there is a marvellous amount of wisdom in the adage.

That there is a deep philosophy, too, in showing how carefully

we should sift misfortune to the dregs, and ascertain what of benefit we might rescue from the dross, is not to be denied; and the more we reflect on it, the more should we see that the germ of all real consolation is intimately bound up in this reservation.

No sooner, then, did Walpole, in novelist phrase, 'realise the fact' that he was to go to Guatemala, than he set very practically to inquire what advantages, if any, could be squeezed out of this unpromising incident.

The creditors—and he had some—would not like it! The dreary process of dunning a man across half the globe, the hopelessness of appeals that took two months to come to hand, and the inefficacy of threats that were wafted over miles of ocean! And certainly he smiled as he thought of these, and rather maliciously bethought him of the truculent importunity that menaced him with some form of publicity in the more insolent appeal to some Minister at home. 'Our tailor will moderate his language, our jeweller will appreciate the merits of polite letter-writing,' thought he. 'A few parallels of latitude become a great schoolmaster.'

But there were greater advantages even than these. This banishment—for it was nothing else—could not by any possibility be persisted in, and if Lady Maude should consent to accompany him, would be very short-lived.

'The women will take it up,' said he, 'and with that charming clanship that distinguishes them, will lead the Foreign Secretary a life of misery till he gives us something better.—"Maude says the thermometer has never been lower than 132°, and that there is no shade. The nights have no breeze, and are rather hotter than the days. She objects seriously to be waited on by people in feathers, and very few of them, and she remonstrates against alligators in the kitchen-garden, and wild cats coming after the canaries in the drawing-room."

'I hear the catalogue of misfortunes, which begins with nothing to eat, plus the terror of being eaten. I recognise the lament over lost civilisation and a wasted life, and I see Downing Street besieged with ladies in deputations, declaring that they care nothing for party or politics, but a great deal for the life of a dear young creature who is to be sacrificed to appease some people belonging to the existing Ministry. I think I know how beautifully illogical they will be, but how necessarily successful; and now for Maude herself.'

Of Lady Maude Bickerstaffe Walpole had seen next to nothing since his return; his own ill-health had confined him to his room, and her inquiries after him had been cold and formal; and

though he wrote a tender little note and asked for books, slyly hinting what measure of bliss a five minutes' visit would confer on him, the books he begged for were sent, but not a line of answer accompanied them. On the whole, he did not dislike this little show of resentment. What he really dreaded was indifference. So long as a woman is piqued with you, something can always be done; it is only when she becomes careless and unmindful of what you do, or say, or look, or think, that the game looks hopeless. Therefore it was that he regarded this demonstration as rather favourable than otherwise.

'Atlee has told her of the Greek! Atlee has stirred up her jealousy of the Titian Girl. Atlee has drawn a long indictment against me, and the fellow has done me good service in giving me something to plead to. Let me have a charge to meet, and I have no misgivings. What really unmans me is the distrust that will not even utter an allegation, and the indifference that does not want disproof.'

He learned that her ladyship was in the garden, and he hastened down to meet her. In his own small way Walpole was a clever tactician; and he counted much on the ardour with which he should open his case, and the amount of impetuosity that would give her very little time for reflection.

'I shall at once assume that her fate is irrevocably knitted to my own, and I shall act as though the tie was indissoluble. After all, if she puts me to the proof, I have her letters—cold and guarded enough, it is true. No fervour, no gush of any kind, but calm dissertations on a future that must come, and a certain dignified acceptance of her own part in it. Not the kind of letters that a Q.C. could read with much rapture before a crowded court, and ask the assembled grocers, 'What happiness has life to offer to the man robbed of those precious pledges of affection—how was he to face the world, stripped of every attribute that cherished hope and fed ambition?"'

He was walking slowly towards her when he first saw her, and he had some seconds to prepare himself ere they met.

'I came down after you, Maude,' said he, in a voice ingeniously modulated between the tone of old intimacy and a slight suspicion of emotion. 'I came down to tell you my news'—he waited, and then added—'my fate!'

Still she was silent, the changed word exciting no more interest than its predecessor.

'Feeling as I do,' he went on, 'and how we stand towards each other, I cannot but know that my destiny has nothing good or evil in it, except as it contributes to your happiness.' He

stole a glance at her, but there was nothing in that cold, calm face that could guide him. With a bold effort, however, he went on: 'My own fortune in life has but one test—is my existence to be shared with you or not? With *your* hand in mine, Maude,'—and he grasped the marble-cold fingers as he spoke—'poverty, exile, hardships, and the world's neglect, have no terrors for me. With your love, every ambition of my heart is gratified. Without it——'

'Well, without it—what?' said she, with a faint smile.

'You would not torture me by such a doubt? Would you rack my soul by a misery I have not words to speak of?'

'I thought you were going to say what it might be, when I stopped you.'

'Oh, drop this cold and bantering tone, dearest Maude. Remember the question is now of my very life itself. If you cannot be affectionate, at least be reasonable!'

'I shall try,' said she calmly.

Stung to the quick by a composure which he could not imitate, he was able, however, to repress every show of anger, and with a manner cold and measured as her own, he went on: 'My lord advises that I should go back to diplomacy, and has asked the Ministers to give me Guatemala. It is nothing very splendid. It is far away in a remote part of the world; not over-well paid, but at least I shall be Chargé-d'Affaires, and by three years—four at most, of this banishment—I shall have a claim for something better.'

'I hope you may, I 'm sure,' said she, as he seemed to expect something like a remark.

'That is not enough, Maude, if the hope be not a wish—and a wish that includes self-interest.'

'I am so dull, Cecil: tell me what you mean.'

'Simply this, then: does your heart tell you that you could share this fortune, and brave these hardships; in one word, will you say what will make me regard this fate as the happiest of my existence? will you give me this dear hand as my own—my own?' and he pressed his lips upon it rapturously as he spoke.

She made no effort to release her hand; nor for a second or two did she say one word. At last, in a very measured tone, she said, 'I should like to have back my letters.'

'Your letters? Do you mean, Maude, that—that you would break with me?'

'I mean certainly that I should not go to this horrid place——'

'Then I shall refuse it,' broke he in impetuously.

'Not that only, Cecil,' said she, for the first time faltering;

'I should like to have back my letters.'

'but except being very good friends, I do not desire that there should be more between us.'

'No engagement?'

'No, no engagement. I do not believe there ever was an actual promise, at least on my part. Other people had no right to promise for either of us—and—and, in fact, the present is a good opportunity to end it.'

'To end it,' echoed he, in intense bitterness; 'to end it?'

'And I should like to have my letters,' said she calmly, while she took some freshly plucked flowers from a basket on her arm, and appeared to seek for something at the bottom of the basket.

'I thought you would come down here, Cecil,' said she, 'when you had spoken to my uncle. Indeed, I was sure you would, and so I brought these with me.' And she drew forth a somewhat thick bundle of notes and letters tied with a narrow ribbon. 'These are yours,' said she, handing them.

Far more piqued by her cold self-possession than really wounded in feeling, he took the packet without a word; at last he said, 'This is your own wish—your own, unprompted by others?'

She stared almost insolently at him for answer.

'I mean, Maude—oh, forgive me if I utter that dear name once more—I mean there has been no influence used to make you treat me thus?'

'You have known me to very little purpose all these years, Cecil Walpole, to ask me such a question.'

'I am not sure of that. I know too well what misrepresentation and calumny can do anywhere; and I have been involved in certain difficulties which, if not explained away, might be made accusations—grave accusations.'

'I make none—I listen to none.'

'I have become an object of complete indifference, then? You feel no interest in me either way. If I dared, Maude, I should like to ask the date of this change—when it began?'

'I don't well know what you mean. There was not, so far as I am aware, anything between us, except a certain esteem and respect, of which convenience was to make something more. Now convenience has broken faith with us, but we are not the less very good friends—excellent friends if you like.'

'Excellent friends! I could swear to the friendship!' said he, with a malicious energy.

'So at least I mean to be,' said she calmly.

'I hope it is not I shall fail in the compact. And now, will my quality of friend entitle me to ask one question, Maude?'

'I am not sure till I hear it.'

'I might have hoped a better opinion of my discretion; at all events, I will risk my question.. What I would ask is, how far Joseph Atlee is mixed up with your judgment of me? Will you tell me this?'

'I will only tell you, sir, that you are over-vain of that discretion you believe you possess.'

'Then I am right,' cried he, almost insolently. 'I *have* hit the blot.'

A glance, a mere glance of haughty disdain, was the only reply she made.

'I am shocked, Maude,' said he at last. 'I am ashamed that we should spend in this way perhaps the very last few minutes we shall ever pass together. Heart-broken as I am, I should desire to carry away one memory at least of her whose love was the loadstar of my existence.'

'I want my letters, Cecil,' said she coldly.

'So that you came down here with mine, prepared for this rupture, Maude? It was all prearranged in your mind.'

'More discretion—more discretion, or good taste—which is it?'

'I ask pardon, most humbly I ask it; your rebuke was quite just. I was presuming upon a past which has no relation to the present. I shall not offend any more. And now, what was it you said?'

'I want my letters.'

'They are here,' said he, drawing a thick envelope fully crammed with letters from his pocket and placing it in her hand. 'Scarcely as carefully or as nicely kept as mine, for they have been read over too many times; and with what rapture, Maude. How pressed to my heart and to my lips, how treasured! Shall I tell you?'

There was that of exaggerated passion—almost rant—in these last words, that certainly did not impress them with reality; and either Lady Maude was right in doubting their sincerity, or cruelly unjust, for she smiled faintly as she heard them.

'No, don't tell me,' said she faintly. 'I am already so much flattered by courteous anticipation of my wishes that I ask for nothing more.'

He bowed his head lowly; but his smile was one of triumph, as he thought how, this time at least, he had wounded her.

'There are some trinkets, Cecil,' said she coldly, 'which I have made into a packet, and you will find them on your dressing-table. And—it may save you some discomfort if I say that you need not give yourself trouble to recover the little ring with an opal I once gave you, for I have it now.'

'May I dare?'

'You may not dare. Good-bye.

And she gave her hand; he bent over it for a moment, scarcely touched it with his lips, and turned away.

CHAPTER LXI

A CHANGE OF FRONT

Of all the discomfitures in life there was one which Cecil Walpole did not believe could possibly befall him. Indeed, if it could have been made a matter of betting, he would have wagered all he had in the world that no woman should ever be able to say she refused his offer of marriage.

He had canvassed the matter very often with himself, and always arrived at the same conclusion—that if a man were not a mere coxcomb, blinded by vanity and self-esteem, he could always know how a woman really felt towards him; and that where the question admitted of a doubt—where, indeed, there was even a flaw in the absolute certainty—no man with a due sense of what was owing to himself would risk his dignity by the possibility of a refusal. It was a part of his peculiar ethics that a man thus rejected was damaged, pretty much as a bill that has been denied acceptance. It was the same wound to credit, the same outrage on character. Considering, therefore, that nothing obliged a man to make an offer of his hand till he had assured himself of success, it was to his thinking a mere gratuitous pursuit of insult to be refused. That no especial delicacy kept these things secret, that women talked of them freely—ay, triumphantly—that they made the staple of conversation at afternoon tea and the club, with all the flippant comments that dear friends know how to contribute as to your vanity and presumption, he was well aware. Indeed, he had been long an eloquent contributor to that scandal literature which amuses the leisure of fashion and helps on the tedium of an ordinary dinner. How Lady Maude would report the late scene in the garden to the Countess of Mecherscroft, who would tell it to her company at her country-house!—How the Lady Georginas would discuss it over luncheon, and the Lord Georges talk of it out shooting! What a host of pleasant anecdotes would be told of his inordinate puppyism and self-esteem! How even the dullest fellows would dare to throw a stone at him! What a target for a while he

would be for every marksman at any range to shoot at! All these his quick-witted ingenuity pictured at once before him.

'I see it all,' cried he, as he paced his room in self-examination. 'I have suffered myself to be carried away by a burst of momentary impulse. I brought up all my reserves, and have failed utterly. Nothing can save me now, but a "change of front." It is the last bit of generalship remaining—a change of front—a change of front!' And he repeated the words over and over, as though hoping they might light up his ingenuity. 'I might go and tell her that all I had been saying was mere jest—that I could never have dreamed of asking her to follow me into barbarism: that to go to Guatemala was equivalent to accepting a yellow fever—it was courting disease, perhaps death; that my insistence was a mere mockery, in the worst possible taste; but that I had already agreed with Lord Danesbury, our engagement should be cancelled; that his lordship's memory of our conversation would corroborate me in saying I had no intention to propose such a sacrifice to her; and indeed I had but provoked her to say the very things, and use the very arguments, I had already employed to myself as a sort of aid to my own heartfelt convictions. Here would be a "change of front" with a vengeance.

'She will already have written off the whole interview: the despatch is finished,' cried he, after a moment. 'It is a change of front the day after the battle. The people will read of my manœuvre with the bulletin of victory before them.

'Poor Frank Touchet used to say,' cried he aloud, '"Whenever they refuse my cheques at the Bank, I always transfer my account"; and fortunately the world is big enough for these tactics for several years. That's a change of front too, if I knew how to adapt it. I must marry another woman—there's nothing else for it. It is the only escape; and the question is, who shall she be?' The more he meditated over this change of front the more he saw that his destiny pointed to the Greek. If he could see clearly before him to a high career in diplomacy, the Greek girl, in everything but fortune, would suit him well. Her marvellous beauty, her grace of manner, her social tact and readiness, her skill in languages, were all the very qualities most in request. Such a woman would make the full complement, by her fascinations, of all that her husband could accomplish by his abilities. The little indiscretions of old men—especially old men—with these women, the lapses of confidence they made them, the dropping admission of this or that intention, made up what Walpole knew to be high diplomacy.

'Nothing worth hearing is ever got by a man,' was an adage he treasured as deep wisdom. Why kings resort to that watering-place, and accidentally meet certain Ministers going somewhere else; why kaisers affect to review troops here, that they may be able to talk statecraft there; how princely compacts and contracts of marriage are made at sulphur springs; all these and such like leaked out as small-talk with a young and pretty woman, whose frivolity of manner went bail for the safety of the confidence, and went far to persuade Walpole, that though bank-stock might be a surer investment, there were paying qualities in certain women that in the end promised larger returns than mere money and higher rewards than mere wealth. 'Yes,' cried he to himself, 'this is the real change of front—this has all in its favour.'

Nor yet all. Strong as Walpole's self-esteem was, and high his estimate of his own capacity, he had—he could not conceal it—a certain misgiving as to whether he really understood that girl or not. 'I have watched many a bolt from her bow,' said he, 'and think I know their range. But now and then she has shot an arrow into the clear sky, and far beyond my sight to follow it.'

That scene in the wood too. Absurd enough that it should obtrude itself at such a moment, but it was the sort of indication that meant much more to a man like Walpole than to men of other experiences. Was she flirting with this young Austrian soldier? No great harm if she were; but still there had been passages between himself and her which should have bound her over to more circumspection. Was there not a shadowy sort of engagement between them? Lawyers deem a mere promise to grant a lease as equivalent to a contract. It would be a curious question in morals to inquire how far the licensed perjuries of courtship are statutory offences. Perhaps a sly consciousness on his own part that he was not playing perfectly fair, made him, as it might do, more than usually tenacious that his adversary should be honest. What chance the innocent public would have with two people who were so adroit with each other was his next thought; and he actually laughed aloud as it occurred to him. 'I only wish my lord would invite us here before we sail. If I could but show her to Maude, half an hour of these women together would be the heaviest vengeance I could ask her! I wonder how that could be managed?'

'A despatch, sir, his lordship begs you to read,' said a servant, entering. It was an open envelope, and contained these words on a slip of paper:—

'W. shall have Guatemala. He must go out by the mail of

November 15. Send him here for instructions.' Some words in cipher followed, and an under-secretary's initials.

'Now, then, for the "change of front." I'll write to Nina by this post. I'll ask my lord to let me tear off this portion of the telegram, and I shall inclose it.'

The letter was not so easily written as he thought—at least he made more than one draft—and was at last in great doubt whether a long statement or a few and very decided lines might be better. How he ultimately determined, and what he said, cannot be given here; for, unhappily, the conditions of my narrative require I should ask my reader to accompany me to a very distant spot and other interests which were just then occupying the attention of an almost forgotten acquaintance of ours, the redoubted Joseph Atlee.

CHAPTER LXII

WITH A PASHA

Joseph Atlee had a very busy morning of it on a certain November day at Pera, when the post brought him tidings that Lord Danesbury had resigned the Irish viceroyalty, and had been once more named to his old post as ambassador at Constantinople.

'My uncle desires me,' wrote Lady Maude, 'to impress you with the now all-important necessity of obtaining the papers you know of, and, so far as you are able, to secure that no authorised copies of them are extant. Kulbash Pasha will, my lord says, be very tractable when once assured that our return to Turkey is a certainty; but should you detect signs of hesitation or distrust in the Grand-Vizier's conduct, you will hint that the investigation as to the issue of the Galatz shares—"preference shares"—may be reopened at any moment, and that the Ottoman Bank agent, Schäffer, has drawn up a memoir which my uncle now holds. I copy my lord's words for all this, and sincerely hope you will understand it, which, I confess, *I* do not at all. My lord cautioned me not to occupy your time or attention by any reference to Irish questions, but leave you perfectly free to deal with those larger interests of the East that should now engage you. I forbear, therefore, to do more than mark with a pencil the part in the debates which might interest you especially, and merely add the fact, otherwise, perhaps, not very credible, that Mr. Walpole *did* write the famous letter imputed to him—*did* promise the amnesty, or whatever be the name of it, and *did*

pledge the honour of the Government to a transaction with these Fenian leaders. With what success to his own prospects, the *Gazette* will speak that announces his appointment to Guatemala.

'I am myself very far from sorry at our change of destination. I prefer the Bosporus to the Bay of Dublin, and like Pera better than the Phœnix. It is not alone that the interests are greater, the questions larger, and the consequences more important to the world at large, but that, as my uncle has just said, you are spared the peddling impertinence of Parliament interfering at every moment, and questioning your conduct, from an invitation to Cardinal Cullen to the dismissal of a chief constable. Happily, the gentlemen at Westminster know nothing about Turkey, and have the prudence not to ventilate their ignorance, except in secret committee. I am sorry to have to tell you that my lord sees great difficulty in what you propose as to yourself. F. O. he says, would not easily consent to your being named even a third secretary without your going through the established grade of attaché. All the unquestionable merits he knows you to possess would count for nothing against an official regulation. The course my lord would suggest is this: To enter now as mere attaché, to continue in this position some three or four months, come over here for the general election in February, get into "the House," and after some few sessions, one or two, rejoin diplomacy, to which you might be appointed as a secretary of legation. My uncle named to me three, if not four cases of this kind—one, indeed, stepped at once into a mission and became a minister; and though of course the Opposition made a fuss, they failed in their attempt to break the appointment, and the man will probably be soon an ambassador. I accept the little yataghan, but sincerely wish the present had been of less value. There is one enormous emerald in the handle which I am much tempted to transfer to a ring. Perhaps I ought, in decency, to have your permission for the change. The burnous is very beautiful, but I could not accept it—an article of dress is in the category of things impossible. Have you no Irish sisters, or even cousins? Pray give me a destination to address it to in your next.

'My uncle desires me to say that, all invaluable as your services have become where you are, he needs you greatly here, and would hear with pleasure that you were about to return. He is curious to know who wrote "L'Orient et Lord D." in the last *Revue des Deux Mondes*. The savagery of the attack implies a personal rancour. Find out the author, and reply to him in the *Edinburgh*. My lord suspects he may have had access to

the papers he has already alluded to, and is the more eager to repossess them.'

A telegraphic despatch in cipher was put into his hands as he was reading. It was from Lord Danesbury, and said: 'Come back as soon as you can, but not before making K. Pasha know his fate is in my hands.'

As the Grand-Vizier had already learned from the Ottoman ambassador at London the news that Lord Danesbury was about to resume his former post at Constantinople, his Turkish impassiveness was in no way imperilled by Atlee's abrupt announcement. It is true he would have been pleased had the English Government sent out some one new to the East and a stranger to all Oriental questions. He would have liked one of those veterans of diplomacy versed in the old-fashioned ways and knaveries of German courts, and whose shrewdest ideas of a subtle policy are centred in a few social spies and a 'Cabinet Noir.' The Pasha had no desire to see there a man who knew all the secret machinery of a Turkish administration, what corruption could do, and where to look for the men who could employ it.

The thing was done, however, and with that philosophy of resignation to a fact in which no nation can rival his own, he muttered his polite congratulations on the event, and declared that the dearest wish of his heart was now accomplished.

'We had half begun to believe you had abandoned us, Mr. Atlee,' said he. 'When England commits her interests to inferior men, she usually means to imply that they are worth nothing better. I am rejoiced to see that we are, at last, awakened from this delusion. With his Excellency Lord Danesbury here, we shall be soon once more where we have been.'

'Your fleet is in effective condition, well armed, and well disciplined?'

'All, all,' smiled the Pasha.

'The army reformed, the artillery supplied with the most efficient guns, and officers of European services encouraged to join your staff?'

'All.'

'Wise economies in your financial matters, close supervision in the collection of the revenue, and searching inquiries where abuses exist?'

'All.'

'Especial care that the administration of justice should be beyond even the malevolence of distrust, that men of station and influence should be clear-handed and honourable, not a taint of unfairness to attach to them?'

'Be it all so,' ejaculated the Pasha blandly.

'By the way, I am reminded by a line I have just received from his Excellency with reference to Sulina, or was it Galatz?'

The Pasha could not decide, and he went on—

'I remember, it is Galatz. There is some curious question there of a concession for a line of railroad, which a Servian commissioner had the skill to obtain from the Cabinet here, by a sort of influence which our Stock Exchange people in London scarcely regard as regular.'

The Pasha nodded to imply attention, and smoked on as before.

'But I weary your Excellency,' said Atlee, rising, 'and my real business here is accomplished.'

'Tell my lord that I await his arrival with impatience, that of all pending questions none shall receive solution till he comes, that I am the very least of his servants.' And with an air of most dignified sincerity, he bowed him out, and Atlee hastened away to tell his chief that he had 'squared the Turk,' and would sail on the morrow.

CHAPTER LXIII

ATLEE ON HIS TRAVEL.

On board the Austrian Lloyd's steamer in which he sailed from Constantinople, Joseph Atlee employed himself in the composition of a small volume purporting to be *The Experiences of a Two Years' Residence in Greece.* In an opening chapter of this work he had modestly intimated to the reader how an intimate acquaintance with the language and literature of modern Greece, great opportunities of mixing with every class and condition of the people, a mind well stored with classical acquirements and thoroughly versed in antiquarian lore, a strong poetic temperament and the feeling of an artist for scenery, had all combined to give him a certain fitness for his task; and by the extracts from his diary it would be seen on what terms of freedom he conversed with Ministers and ambassadors, even with royalty itself.

A most pitiless chapter was devoted to the exposure of the mistakes and misrepresentations of a late *Quarterly* article called 'Greece and her Protectors,' whose statements were the more mercilessly handled and ridiculed that the paper in question had been written by himself, and the sarcastic allusions to the sources of the information not the less pungent on that account.

That the writer had been admitted to frequent audiences of the king, that he had discussed with his Majesty the cutting of the Isthmus of Corinth, that the king had seriously confided to him his belief that in the event of his abdication, the Ionian Islands must revert to him as a personal appanage, the terms on which they were annexed to Greece being decided by lawyers to bear this interpretation—all these Atlee denied of his own knowledge, and asked the reader to follow him into the royal cabinet for his reasons.

When, therefore, he heard that from some damage to the machinery the vessel must be detained some days at Syra to refit, Atlee was scarcely sorry that necessity gave him an opportunity to visit Athens.

A little about Ulysses and a good deal about Lord Byron, a smattering of Grote, and a more perfect memory of About, were, as he owned to himself, all his Greece; but he could answer for what three days in the country would do for him, particularly with that spirit of candid inquiry he could now bring to his task, and the genuine fairness with which he desired to judge the people.

'The two years' resident' in Athens must doubtless often have dined with his Minister, and so Atlee sent his card to the Legation.

Mr. Brammell, our 'present Minister at Athens,' as the *Times* continued to designate him, as though to imply that the appointment might not be permanent, was an excellent man, of that stamp of which diplomacy has more—who consider that the Court to which they are accredited concentrates for the time the political interests of the globe. That any one in Europe thought, read, spoke, or listened to anything but what was then happening in Greece, Mr. Brammell could not believe. That France or Prussia, Spain or Italy, could divide attention with this small kingdom; that the great political minds of the Continent were not more eager to know what Comoundouros thought and Bulgaris required, than all about Bismarck and Gortchakoff, he could not be brought to conceive; and in consequence of these convictions, he was an admirable Minister, and fully represented all the interests of his country.

As that admirable public instructor, the *Levant Herald*, had frequently mentioned Atlee's name, now as the guest of Kulbash Pasha, now as having attended some public ceremony with other persons of importance, and once as 'our distinguished countryman, whose wise suggestions and acute observations have been duly accepted by the imperial cabinet,' Brammell at once knew

that this distinguished countryman should be entertained at dinner, and he sent him an invitation. That habit—so popular of late years—to send out some man from England to do something at a foreign Court that the British ambassador or Minister there either has not done, or cannot do, possibly ought never to do, had invested Atlee in Brammell's eyes with the character of one of those semi-accredited inscrutable people whose function it would seem to be to make us out the most meddlesome people in Europe.

Of course Brammell was not pleased to see him at Athens, and he ran over all the possible contingencies he might have come for. It might be the old Greek loan, which was to be raked up again as a new grievance. It might be the pensions that they would not pay, or the brigands that they would not catch—pretty much for the same reasons—that they could not. It might be that they wanted to hear what Tsousicheff, the new Russian Minister, was doing, and whether the farce of the 'Grand Idea' was advertised for repetition. It might be Crete was on the *tapis*, or it might be the question of the Greek envoy to the Porte that the Sultan refused to receive, and which promised to turn out a very pretty quarrel if only adroitly treated.

The more Brammell thought of it, the more he felt assured this must be the reason of Atlee's visit, and the more indignant he grew that extra-official means should be employed to investigate what he had written seventeen despatches to explain—seventeen despatches, with nine 'inclosures,' and a 'private and confidential,' about to appear in a blue-book.

To make the dinner as confidential as might be, the only guests besides Atlee were a couple of yachting Englishmen, a German Professor of Archæology, and the American Minister, who, of course, speaking no language but his own, could always be escaped from by a digression into French, German, or Italian.

Atlee felt, as he entered the drawing-room, that the company was what he irreverently called afterwards, a scratch team; and with an almost equal quickness, he saw that he himself was the 'personage' of the entertainment, the 'man of mark' of the party.

The same tact which enabled him to perceive all this, made him especially guarded in all he said, so that his host's efforts to unveil his intentions and learn what he had come for were complete failures. 'Greece was a charming country—Greece was the parent of any civilisation we boasted. She gave us those ideas of architecture with which we raised that glorious temple at Kensington and that taste for sculpture which we exhibited

near Apsley House. Aristophanes gave us our comic drama, and only the defaults of our language made it difficult to show why the member for Cork did not more often recall Demosthenes.'

As for insolvency, it was a very gentlemanlike failing; while brigandage was only what Sheil used to euphemise as 'the wild justice' of noble spirits, too impatient for the sluggard steps of slow redress, and too proud not to be self-reliant.

Thus excusing and extenuating wherein he could not flatter, Atlee talked on the entire evening, till he sent the two Englishmen home heartily sick of a bombastic eulogy on the land where a pilot had run their cutter on a rock, and a revenue officer had seized all their tobacco. The German had retired early, and the Yankee hastened to his lodgings to 'jot down' all the fine things he could commit to his next despatch home, and overwhelm Mr. Seward with an array of historic celebrities such as had never been seen at Washington.

'They 're gone at last,' said the Minister. 'Let us have our cigar on the terrace.'

The unbounded frankness, the unlimited trustfulness that now ensued between these two men, was charming. Brammell represented one hard worked and sorely tried in his country's service—the perfect slave of office, spending nights long at his desk, but not appreciated, not valued at home. It was delightful, therefore, to him, to find a man like Atlee to whom he could tell this—could tell for what an ungrateful country he toiled, what ignorance he sought to enlighten, what actual stupidity he had to counteract. He spoke of the Office—from his tone of horror it might have been the Holy Office—with a sort of tremulous terror and aversion: the absurd instructions they sent him, the impossible things he was to do, the inconceivable lines of policy he was to insist on; how but for him the king would abdicate, and a Russian protectorate be proclaimed; how the revolt at Athens would be proclaimed in Thessaly; how Skulkekoff, the Russian general, was waiting to move into the provinces 'at the first check my policy shall receive here,' cried he. 'I shall show you on this map; and here are the names, armament, and tonnage of a hundred and ninety-four gunboats now ready at Nicholief, to move down on Constantinople.'

Was it not strange, was it not worse than strange, after such a show of unbounded confidence as this, Atlee would reveal nothing? Whatever his grievances against the people he served—and who is without them?—he would say nothing, he had no complaint to make. Things he admitted were bad, but they might be worse. The monarchy existed still, and the House of

Lords was, for a while at least, tolerated. Ireland was disturbed, but not in open rebellion; and if we had no army to speak of, we still had a navy, and even the present Admiralty only lost about five ships a year!

Till long after midnight did they fence with each other, with buttons on their foils—very harmlessly, no doubt, but very uselessly too: Brammell could make nothing of a man who neither wanted to hear about finance or taxation, court scandal, schools, or public robbery; and though he could not in so many words ask—What have you come for? why are you here? he said this in full fifty different ways for three hours and more.

'You make some stay amongst us, I trust?' said the Minister as his guest rose to take leave. 'You mean to see something of this interesting country before you leave?'

'I fear not; when the repairs to the steamer enable her to put to sea, they are to let me know by telegraph, and I shall join her.'

'Are you so pressed for time that you cannot spare us a week or two?'

'Totally impossible! Parliament will sit in January next, and I must hasten home.'

This was to imply that he was in the House, or that he expected to be, or that he ought to be, and even if he were not, that his presence in England was all-essential to somebody who was in Parliament, and for whom his information, his explanation, his accusation, or anything else, was all needed, and so Brammell read it and bowed accordingly.

'By the way,' said the Minister, as the other was leaving the room, and with that sudden abruptness of a wayward thought, 'we have been talking of all sorts of things and people, but not a word about what we are so full of here. How is this difficulty about the new Greek envoy to the Porte to end? You know of course, the Sultan refuses to receive him?'

'The Pasha told me something of it, but I confess to have paid little attention. I treated the matter as insignificant.'

'Insignificant! You cannot mean that an affront so openly administered as this, the greatest national offence that could be offered, is insignificant?' and then with a volubility that smacked very little of want of preparation, he showed that the idea of sending a particular man, long compromised by his complicity in the Cretan revolt, to Constantinople, came from Russia, and that the opposition of the Porte to accept him was also Russian. 'I got to the bottom of the whole intrigue. I wrote home how Tsousicheff was nursing this new quarrel. I told our people

facts of the Muscovite policy that they never got a hint of from their ambassador at St. Petersburg.'

'It was rare luck that we had you here: good-night, good-night,' said Atlee as he buttoned his coat.

'More than that, I said, "If the Cabinet here persist in sending Kostalergi——"'

'Whom did you say? What name was it you said?'

'Kostalergi—the Prince. As much a prince as you are. First of all, they have no better; and secondly, this is the most consummate adventurer in the East.'

'I should like to know him. Is he here—at Athens?'

'Of course he is. He is waiting till he hears the Sultan will receive him.'

'I should like to know him,' said Atlee, more seriously.

'Nothing easier. He comes here every day. Will you meet him at dinner to-morrow?'

'Delighted! but then I should like a little conversation with him in the morning. Perhaps you would kindly make me known to him?'

'With sincere pleasure. I'll write and ask him to dine—and I'll say that you will wait on him. I'll say, "My distinguished friend Mr. Atlee, of whom you have heard, will wait on you about eleven or twelve." Will that do?'

'Perfectly. So then I may make my visit on the presumption of being expected?'

'Certainly. Not that Kostalergi wants much preparation. He plays baccarat all night, but he is at his desk at six.'

'Is he rich?'

'Hasn't a sixpence—but plays all the same. And what people are more surprised at, pays when he loses. If I had not already passed an evening in your company, I should be bold enough to hint to you the need of caution—great caution—in talking with him.'

'I know—I am aware,' said Atlee, with a meaning smile.

'You will not be misled by his cunning, Mr. Atlee, but beware of his candour.'

'I will be on my guard. Many thanks for the caution Good-night!—once more, good-night!'

CHAPTER LXIV

GREEK MEETS GREEK

So excited did Atlee feel about meeting the father of Nina Kostalergi—of whose strange doings and adventurous life he had heard much—that he scarcely slept the entire night. It puzzled him greatly to determine in what character he should present himself to this crafty Greek. Political amateurship was now so popular in England, that he might easily enough pass off for one of those 'Bulls' desirous to make himself up on the Greek question. This was a part that offered no difficulty. 'Give me five minutes of any man—a little longer with a woman—and I 'll know where his sympathies incline to.' This was a constant boast of his, and not altogether a vain one. He might be an archæological traveller eager about new-discovered relics and curious about ruined temples. He might be a yachting man, who only cared for Salamis as good anchorage, nor thought of the Acropolis, except as a point of departure; or he might be one of those myriads who travel without knowing where, or caring why: airing their ennui now at Thebes, now at Trolhatten; a weariful, dispirited race, who rarely look so thoroughly alive as when choosing a cigar or changing their money. There was no reason why the 'distinguished Mr. Atlee' might not be one of these—he was accredited, too, by his Minister, and his 'solidarity,' as the French call it, was beyond question.

While yet revolving these points, a kavass—with much gold in his jacket, and a voluminous petticoat of white calico—came to inform him that his Excellency the Prince hoped to see him at breakfast at eleven o'clock; and it now only wanted a few minutes of that hour. Atlee detained the messenger to show him the road, and at last set out.

Traversing one dreary, ill-built street after another, they arrived at last at what seemed a little lane, the entrance to which carriages were denied by a line of stone posts, at the extremity of which a small green gate appeared in a wall. Pushing this wide open, the kavass stood respectfully, while Atlee passed in, and found himself in what for Greece was a garden. There were two fine palm-trees, and a small scrub of oleanders and dwarf cedars that grew around a little fish-pond, where a small Triton in the middle, with distended cheeks, should have poured forth a refreshing jet of water, but his lips were dry, and

his conch-shell empty, and the muddy tank at his feet a mere surface of broad water-lilies convulsively shaken by bull-frogs. A short shady path led to the house, a two-storeyed edifice, with the external stair of wood that seemed to crawl round it on every side

In a good-sized room of the ground-floor Atlee found the prince awaiting him. He was confined to a sofa by a slight sprain, he called it, and apologised for his not being able to rise.

The prince, though advanced in years, was still handsome: his features had all the splendid regularity of their Greek origin; but in the enormous orbits, of which the tint was nearly black, and the indented temples, traversed by veins of immense size, and the firm compression of his lips, might be read the signs of a man who carried the gambling spirit into every incident of life, one ready 'to back his luck,' and show a bold front to fortune when fate proved adverse.

The Greek's manner was perfect. There was all the ease of a man used to society, with a sort of half-sly courtesy, as he said, 'This is kindness, Mr. Atlee—this is real kindness. I scarcely thought an Englishman would have the courage to call upon anything so unpopular as I am.'

'I have come to see you and the Parthenon, Prince, and I have begun with you.'

'And you will tell them, when you get home, that I am not the terrible revolutionist they think me: that I am neither Danton nor Félix Pyat, but a very mild and rather tiresome old man, whose extreme violence goes no further than believing that people ought to be masters in their own house, and that when any one disputes the right, the best thing is to throw him out of the window.'

'If he will not go by the door,' remarked Atlee.

'No, I would not give him the chance of the door. Otherwise you make no distinction between your friends and your enemies. It is by the mild methods—what you call "milk-and-water methods"—men spoil all their efforts for freedom. You always want to cut off somebody's head and spill no blood. There's the mistake of those Irish rebels: they tell me they have courage, but I find it hard to believe them.'

'Do believe them then, and know for certain that there is not a braver people in Europe.'

'How do you keep them down, then?'

'You must not ask *me* that, for I am one of them.'

'You Irish?'

'Yes, Irish—very Irish.'

'Ah! I see. Irish in an English sense? Just as there are Greeks here who believe in Kulbash Pasha, and would say, Stay at home and till your currant-fields and mind your coasting-trade. Don't try to be civilised, for civilisation goes badly with brigandage, and scarcely suits trickery. And you are aware, Mr. Atlee, that trickery and brigandage are more to Greece than olives or dried figs?'

There was that of mockery in the way he said this, and the little smile that played about his mouth when he finished, that left Atlee in considerable doubt how to read him.

'I study your newspapers, Mr. Atlee,' resumed he. 'I never omit to read your *Times*, and I see how my old acquaintance, Lord Danesbury, has been making Turkey out of Ireland! It is so hard to persuade an old ambassador that you cannot do everything by corruption?'

'I scarcely think you do him justice.'

'Poor Danesbury,' ejaculated he sorrowfully.

'You opine that his policy is a mistake?'

'Poor Danesbury!' said he again.

'He is one of our ablest men, notwithstanding. At this moment we have not his superior in anything.'

'I was going to say, Poor Danesbury, but I now say, Poor England.'

Atlee bit his lips with anger at the sarcasm, but went on, 'I infer you are not aware of the exact share subordinates have had in what you call Lord Danesbury's Irish blunders——'

'Pardon my interrupting you, but a really able man has no subordinates. His inferior agents are so thoroughly absorbed by his own individuality that they have no wills—no instincts—and, therefore, they can do no indiscretions. They are the simple emanations of himself in action.'

'In Turkey, perhaps,' said Atlee, with a smile.

'If in Turkey, why not in England, or, at least, in Ireland? If you are well served—and mind, you must be well served, or you are powerless—you can always in political life see the adversary's hand. That he sees yours, is of course true: the great question then is, how much you mean to mislead him by the showing it? I give you an instance: Lord Danesbury's cleverest stroke in policy here, the one hit probably he made in the East, was to have a private correspondence with the Khedive made known to the Russian embassy, and induce Gortchakoff to believe that he could not trust the Pasha! All the Russian preparations to move down on the Provinces were countermanded. The stores of grain that were being made on the Pruth were

arrested, and three, nearly four weeks elapsed before the mistake was discovered, and in that interval England had reinforced the squadron at Malta, and taken steps to encourage Turkey—always to be done by money, or promise of money.'

'It was a *coup* of great adroitness,' said Atlee.

'It was more,' cried the Greek, with elation. 'It was a move of such subtlety as smacks of something higher than the Saxon! The men who do these things have the instinct of their craft. It is theirs to understand that chemistry of human motives by which a certain combination results in effects totally remote from the agents that produce it. Can you follow me?'

'I believe I can.'

'I would rather say, Is my attempt at an explanation sufficiently clear to be intelligible?'

Atlee looked fixedly at him, and he could do so unobserved, for the other was now occupied in preparing his pipe, without minding the question. Therefore Atlee set himself to study the features before him. It was evident enough, from the intensity of his gaze and a certain trembling of his upper lip, that the scrutiny cost him no common effort. It was, in fact, the effort to divine what, if he mistook to read aright, would be an irreparable blunder.

With the long-drawn inspiration a man makes before he adventures a daring feat, he said: 'It is time I should be candid with you, Prince. It is time I should tell you that I am in Greece only to see *you*.'

'To see me?' said the other, and a very faint flush passed across his face.

'To see you,' said Atlee slowly, while he drew out a pocket-book and took from it a letter. 'This,' said he, handing it, 'is to your address.' The words on the cover were M. Spiridionides.

'I am Spiridion Kostalergi, and by birth a Prince of Delos,' said the Greek, waving back the letter.

'I am well aware of that, and it is only in perfect confidence that I venture to recall a past that your Excellency will see I respect,' and Atlee spoke with an air of deference.

'The antecedents of the men who serve this country are not to be measured by the artificial habits of a people who regulate condition by money. *Your* statesmen have no need to be journalists, teachers, tutors; Frenchmen and Italians are all these, and on the Lower Danube and in Greece we are these and something more.—Nor are we less politicians that we are more men of the world.—The little of statecraft that French Emperor ever knew, he picked up in his days of exile.' All this he blurted out in

short and passionate bursts, like an angry man who was trying to be logical in his anger, and to make an effort of reason subdue his wrath.

'If I had not understood these things as you yourself understand them, I should not have been so indiscreet as to offer you that letter,' and once more he proffered it.

This time the Greek took it, tore open the envelope, and read it through.

'It is from Lord Danesbury,' said he at length. 'When we parted last, I was, in a certain sense, my lord's subordinate—that is, there were things none of his staff or secretaries or attachés or dragomen could do, and I could do them. Times are changed, and if we are to meet again, it will be as colleagues. It is true, Mr. Atlee, the ambassador of England and the envoy of Greece are not exactly of the same rank. I do not permit myself many illusions, and this is not one of them; but remember, if Great Britain be a first-rate Power, Greece is a volcano. It is for us to say when there shall be an eruption.'

It was evident, from the rambling tenor of this speech, he was speaking rather to conceal his thoughts and give himself time for reflection, than to enunciate any definite opinion; and so Atlee, with native acuteness, read him, as he simply bowed a cold assent.

'Why should I give him back his letters?' burst out the Greek warmly. 'What does he offer me in exchange for them? Money! mere money! By what presumption does he assume that I must be in such want of money, that the only question should be the sum? May not the time come when I shall be questioned in our chamber as to certain matters of policy, and my only vindication be the documents of this same English ambassador, written in his own hand, and signed with his name? Will you tell me that the triumphant assertion of a man's honour is not more to him than bank-notes?'

Though the heroic spirit of this speech went but a short way to deceive Atlee, who only read it as a plea for a higher price, it was his policy to seem to believe every word of it, and he looked a perfect picture of quiet conviction.

'You little suspect what these letters are?' said the Greek.

'I believe I know: I rather think I have a catalogue of them and their contents,' mildly hinted the other.

'Ah! indeed, and are you prepared to vouch for the accuracy and completeness of your list?'

'You must be aware it is only my lord himself can answer that question.'

'Is there—in your enumeration—is there the letter about Crete? and the false news that deceived the Baron de Baude? Is there the note of my instructions to the Khedive? Is there—I'm sure there is not—any mention of the negotiation with Stephanotis Bey?'

'I have seen Stephanotis myself; I have just come from him,' said Atlee, grasping at the escape the name offered.

'Ah, you know the old Paiikao?'

'Intimately; we are, I hope, close friends; he was at Kulbash Pasha's while I was there, and we had much talk together.'

'And from him it was you learned that Spiridionides was Spiridion Kostalergi?' said the Greek slowly.

'Surely this is not meant as a question, or, at least, a question to be answered?' said Atlee, smiling.

'No, no, of course not,' replied the other politely. 'We are chatting together, if not like old friends, like men who have every element to become dear friends. We see life pretty much from the same point of view, Mr. Atlee, is it not so?'

'It would be a great flattery to me to think it.' And Joe's eyes sparkled as he spoke.

'One has to make his choice somewhat early in the world, whether he will hunt or be hunted: I believe that is about the case.'

'I suspect so.'

'I did not take long to decide: *I* took my place with the wolves!' Nothing could be more quietly uttered than these words; but there was a savage ferocity in his look as he said them that held Atlee almost spellbound. 'And you, Mr. Atlee? and you? I need scarcely ask where *your* choice fell!'

It was so palpable that the words meant a compliment, Atlee had only to smile a polite acceptance of them.

'These letters,' said the Greek, resuming, and like one who had not mentally lapsed from the theme—'these letters are all that my lord deems them. They are the very stuff that, in your country of publicity and free discussion, would make or mar the very best reputations amongst you. And,' added he, after a pause, 'there are none of them destroyed, none!'

'He is aware of that.'

'No, he is not aware of it to the extent I speak of, for many of the documents that he believed he saw burned in his own presence, on his own hearth, are here, here in the room we sit in! So that I am in the proud position of being able to vindicate his policy in many cases where his memory might prove weak or fallacious.'

'Although I know Lord Danesbury's value for these papers does not bear out your own, I will not suffer myself to discuss the point. I return at once to what I have come for. Shall I make you an offer in money for them, Monsieur Kostalergi?'

'What is the amount you propose?'

'I was to negotiate for a thousand pounds first. I was to give two thousand at the last resort. I will begin at the last resort and pay you two.'

'Why not piastres, Mr. Atlee? I am sure your instructions must have said piastres.'

Quite unmoved by the sarcasm, Atlee took out his pocket-book and read from a memorandum: 'Should M. Kostalergi refuse your offer, or think it insufficient, on no account let the negotiation take any turn of acrimony or recrimination. He has rendered me great services in past times, and it will be for himself to determine whether he should do or say what should in any way bar our future relations together.'

'This is not a menace?' said the Greek, smiling superciliously.

'No. It is simply an instruction,' said the other, after a slight hesitation.

'The men who make a trade of diplomacy,' said the Greek haughtily, 'reserve it for their dealings with Cabinets. In home or familiar intercourse they are straightforward and simple. Without these papers your noble master cannot return to Turkey as ambassador. Do not interrupt me. He cannot come back as ambassador to the Porte! It is for him to say how he estimates the post. An ambitious man with ample reason for his ambition, an able man with a thorough conviction of his ability, a patriotic man who understood and saw the services he could render to his country, would not bargain at the price the place should cost him, nor say ten thousand pounds too much to pay for it.'

'Ten thousand pounds!' exclaimed Atlee, but in real and unfeigned astonishment.

'I have said ten thousand, and I will not say nine—nor nine thousand nine hundred.'

Atlee slowly arose and took his hat.

'I have too much respect for yourself and for your time, M. Kostalergi, to impose any longer on your leisure. I have no need to say that your proposal is totally unacceptable.'

'You have not heard it all, sir. The money is but a part of what I insist on. I shall demand, besides, that the British ambassador at Constantinople shall formally support my claim to be received as envoy from Greece, and that the whole might of England be pledged to the ratification of my appointment.'

A very cold but not uncourteous smile was all Atlee's acknowledgment of this speech.

'There are small details which regard my title and the rank that I lay claim to. With these I do not trouble you. I will merely say I reserve them if we should discuss this in future.'

'Of that there is little prospect. Indeed, I see none whatever. I may say this much, however, Prince, that I shall most willingly undertake to place your claims to be received as Minister for Greece at the Porte under Lord Danesbury's notice, and, I have every hope, for favourable consideration. We are not likely to meet again: may I assume that we part friends?'

'You only anticipate my own sincere desire.'

As they passed slowly through the garden, Atlee stopped and said: 'Had I been able to tell my lord, "The Prince is just named special envoy at Constantinople. The Turks are offended at something he has done in Crete or Thessaly. Without certain pressure on the Divan they will not receive him. Will your lordship empower me to say that you will undertake this, and, moreover, enable me to assure him that all the cost and expenditure of his outfit shall be met in a suitable form?" If, in fact, you give me your permission to submit such a basis as this, I should leave Athens far happier than I feel now.'

'The Chamber has already voted the outfit. It is very modest, but it is enough. Our national resources are at a low ebb. You might, indeed—that is, if you still wished to plead my cause—you might tell my lord that I had destined this sum as the fortune of my daughter. I have a daughter, Mr. Atlee, and at present sojourning in your own country. And though at one time I was minded to recall her, and take her with me to Turkey, I have grown to doubt whether it would be a wise policy. Our Greek contingencies are too many and too sudden to let us project very far in life.'

'Strange enough,' said Atlee thoughtfully, 'you have just—as it were by mere hazard—struck the one chord in the English nature that will always respond to the appeal of a home affection. Were I to say, "Do you know why Kostalergi makes so hard a bargain? It is to endow a daughter. It is the sole provision he stipulates to make her—Greek statesmen can amass no fortunes—this hazard will secure the girl's future!" On my life, I cannot think of one argument that would have equal weight.'

Kostalergi smiled faintly, but did not speak.

'Lord Danesbury never married, but I know with what interest and affection he follows the fortunes of men who live to secure the happiness of their children. It is the one plea he could not

resist; to be sure he might say, "Kostalergi told you this, and perhaps at the time he himself believed it; but how can a man who likes the world and its very costliest pleasures guard himself against his own habits? Who is to pledge his honour that the girl will ever be the owner of this sum?"'

'I shall place *that* beyond a cavil or a question: he shall be himself her guardian. The money shall not leave his hands till she marries. You have your own laws, by which a man can charge his estate with the payment of a certain amount. My lord, if he assents to this, will know how it may be done. I repeat, I do not desire to touch a drachma of the sum.'

'You interest me immensely. I cannot tell you how intensely I feel interested in all this. In fact, I shall own to you frankly that you have at last employed an argument, I do not know how, even if I wished, to answer. Am I at liberty to state this pretty much as you have told it?'

'Every word of it.'

'Will you go further—will you give me a little line, a memorandum in your own hand, to show that I do not misstate nor mistake you—that I have your meaning correctly, and without even a chance of error?'

'I will write it formally and deliberately.'

The bell of the outer door rang at the moment. It was a telegraphic message to Atlee, to say that the steamer had perfected her repairs and would sail that evening.

'You mean to sail with her?' asked the Greek. 'Well, within an hour, you shall have my packet. Good-bye. I have no doubt we shall hear of each other again.'

'I think I could venture to bet on it,' were Atlee's last words as he turned away.

CHAPTER LXV

IN TOWN

Lord Danesbury had arrived at Bruton Street to confer with certain members of the Cabinet who remained in town after the session, chiefly to consult with him. He was accompanied by his niece, Lady Maude, and by Walpole, the latter continuing to reside under his roof, rather from old habit than from any strong wish on either side.

Walpole had obtained a short extension of his leave, and employed the time in endeavouring to make up his mind about

a certain letter to Nina Kostalergi, which he had written nearly fifty times in different versions and destroyed. Neither his lordship nor his niece ever saw him. They knew he had a room or two somewhere, a servant was occasionally encountered on the way to him with a breakfast-tray and an urn; his letters were seen on the hall-table; but, except these, he gave no signs of life—never appeared at luncheon or at dinner—and as much dropped out of all memory or interest as though he had ceased to be.

It was one evening, yet early—scarcely eleven o'clock—as Lord Danesbury's little party of four Cabinet chiefs had just departed, that he sat at the drawing-room fire with Lady Maude, chatting over the events of the evening's conversation, and discussing, as men will do at times, the characters of their guests.

'It has been nearly as tiresome as a Cabinet Council, Maude!' said he, with a sigh, 'and not unlike it in one thing—it was almost always the men who knew least of any matter who discussed it most exhaustively.'

'I conclude you know what you are going out to do, my lord, and do not care to hear the desultory notions of people who know nothing.'

'Just so. What could a First Lord tell me about those Russian intrigues in Albania, or is it likely that a Home Secretary is aware of what is preparing in Montenegro? They get hold of some crotchet in the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, and assuming it all to be true, they ask defiantly, "How are you going to deal with that? Why did you not foresee the other?" and such like. How little they know, as that fellow Atlee says, that a man evolves his Turkey out of the necessities of his pocket, and captures his Constantinople to pay for a dinner at the "Frères." What fleets of Russian gunboats have I seen launched to procure a few bottles of champagne! I remember a chasse or Kersch, with the café, costing a whole battery of Krupp's breech-loaders!'

'Are our own journals more correct?'

'They are more cautious, Maude—far more cautious. Nine days' wonders with us would be too costly. Nothing must be risked that can affect the funds. The share-list is too solemn a thing for joking.'

'The Premier was very silent to-night,' said she, after a pause.

'He generally is in company: he looks like a man bored at being obliged to listen to people saying the things that he knows as well, and could tell better, than they do.'

'How completely he appears to have forgiven or forgotten the Irish fiasco.'

'Of course he has. An extra blunder in the conduct of Irish affairs is only like an additional mask in a fancy ball—the whole thing is motley; and asking for consistency would be like requesting the company to behave like arch-deacons.'

'And so the mischief has blown over?'

'In a measure it has. The Opposition quarrelled amongst themselves; and such as were not ready to take office if we were beaten, declined to press the motion. The irresponsibles went on, as they always do, to their own destruction. They became violent, and, of course, our people appealed against the violence, and with such temperate language and good-breeding that we carried the House with us.'

'I see there was quite a sensation about the word "villain."'

'No; miscreant. It was miscreant—a word very popular in O'Connell's day, but rather obsolete now. When the Speaker called on the member for an apology, we had won the day! These rash utterances in debate are the explosive balls that no one must use in battle; and if we only discover one in a fellow's pouch, we discredit the whole army.'

'I forget; did they press for a division?'

'No; we stopped them. We agreed to give them a "special committee to inquire." Of all devices for secrecy invented, I know of none like a "special committee of inquiry." Whatever people have known beforehand, their faith will now be shaken in, and every possible or accidental contingency assume a shape, a size, and a stability beyond all belief. They have got their committee, and I wish them luck of it! The only men who could tell them anything will take care not to criminate themselves, and the report will be a plaintive cry over a country where so few people can be persuaded to tell the truth, and nobody should seem any worse in consequence.'

'Cecil certainly did it,' said she, with a certain bitterness.

'I suppose he did. These young players are always thinking of scoring eight or ten on a single hazard: one should never back them!'

'Mr. Atlee said there was some female influence at work. He would not tell what nor whom. Possibly he did not know.'

'I rather suspect he *did* know. They were people, if I mistake not, belonging to that Irish castle—Kil—Kil-somebody, or Kil-something.'

'Was Walpole flirting there? was he going to marry one of them?'

'Flirting, I take it, must have been the extent of the folly. Cecil often said he could not marry Irish. I have known men

do it! You are aware, Maude,' and here he looked with uncommon gravity, 'the penal laws have all been repealed.'

'I was speaking of society, my lord, not the statutes,' said she resentfully, and half suspicious of a sly jest.

'Had she money?' asked he curtly.

'I cannot tell; I know nothing of these people whatever! I remember something—it was a newspaper story—of a girl that saved Cecil's life by throwing herself before him—a very pretty incident it was; but these things make no figure in a settlement; and a woman may be as bold as Joan of Arc, and not have sixpence. Atlee says you can always settle the courage on the younger children.'

'Atlee's an arrant scamp,' said my lord, laughing. 'He should have written some days since.'

'I suppose he is too late for the borough: the Cradford election comes on next week?' Though there could not be anything more languidly indifferent than her voice in this question, a faint pinkish tinge flitted across her cheek, and left it colourless as before.

'Yes, he has his address out, and there is a sort of committee—certain licensed-victualler people—to whom he had been promising some especial Sabbath-breaking that they yearn after. I have not read it.'

'I have; and it is cleverly written, and there is little more radical in it than we heard this very day at dinner. He tells the electors, "You are no more bound to the support of an army or a navy, if you do not wish to fight, than to maintain the College of Surgeons or Physicians, if you object to take physic." He says, "To tell *me* that I, with eight shillings a week, have an equal interest in resisting invasion as your Lord Dido, with eighty thousand per annum, is simply nonsense. If you," cries he to one of his supporters, "were to be offered your life by a highwayman on surrendering some few pence or halfpence you carried in *your* pocket, you do not mean to dictate what my Lord Marquis might do, who has got a gold watch and a pocketful of notes in *his*. And so I say once more, let the rich pay for the defence of what they value. You and I have nothing worth fighting for, and we will not fight. Then as to religion——"'

'Oh, spare me his theology! I can almost imagine it, Maude. I had no conception he was such a Radical.'

'He is not really, my lord; but he tells me that we must all go through this stage. It is, as he says, like a course of those waters whose benefit is exactly in proportion to the way they

disagree with you at first. He even said, one evening before he went away, "Take my word for it, Lady Maude, we shall be burning these apostles of ballot and universal suffrage in effigy one day; but I intend to go beyond every one else in the meanwhile, else the rebound will lose half its excellence."'

'What is this?' cried he, as the servant entered with a telegram. 'This is from Athens, Maude, and in cipher, too. How are we to make it out.'

'Cecil has the key, my lord. It is the diplomatic cipher.'

'Do you think you could find it in his room, Maude? It is possible this might be imminent.'

'I shall see if he is at home,' said she, rising to ring the bell. The servant sent to inquire returned, saying that Mr. Walpole had dined abroad, and not returned since dinner.

'I'm sure you could find the book, Maude, and it is a small square-shaped volume, bound in dark Russia leather, marked with F. O. on the cover.'

'I know the look of it well enough; but I do not fancy ransacking Cecil's chamber.'

'I do not know that I should like to await his return to read my despatch. I can just make out that it comes from Atlee.'

'I suppose I had better go, then,' said she reluctantly, as she rose and left the room.

Ordering the butler to precede and show her the way, Lady Maude ascended to a storey above that she usually inhabited, and found herself in a very spacious chamber, with an alcove, into which a bed fitted, the remaining space being arranged like an ordinary sitting-room. There were numerous chairs and sofas of comfortable form, a well-cushioned ottoman, smelling, indeed, villainously of tobacco, and a neat writing-table, with a most luxurious arrangement of shaded wax-lights above it.

A singularly well-executed photograph of a young and very lovely woman, with masses of loose hair flowing over her neck and shoulders, stood on a little easel on the desk, and it was, strange enough, with a sense of actual relief, Maude read the word Titian on the frame. It was a copy of the great master's picture in the Dresden Gallery, and of which there is a replica in the Barberini Palace at Rome; but still the portrait had another memory for Lady Maude, who quickly recalled the girl she had once seen in a crowded assembly, passing through a murmur of admiration that no conventionality could repress, and whose marvellous beauty seemed to glow with the homage it inspired.

Scraps of poetry, copies of verses, changed and blotted couplets, were scrawled on loose sheets of paper on the desk; but Maude

minded none of these, as she pushed them away to rest her arm on the table, while she sat gazing on the picture.

The face had so completely absorbed her attention—so, to say, fascinated her—that when the servant had found the volume he was in search of, and presented it to her, she merely said, 'Take it to my lord,' and sat still, with her head resting on her hands, and her eyes fixed on the portrait.

'There may be some resemblance, there may be, at least, what might remind people of "the Laura"—so was it called; but who will pretend that *she* carried her head with that swing of lofty pride, or that *her* look could rival the blended majesty and womanhood we see here! I do not—I cannot believe it!'

'What is it, Maude, that you will not or cannot believe?' said a low voice, and she saw Walpole standing beside her.

'Let me first excuse myself for being here,' said she, blushing. 'I came in search of that little cipher-book to interpret a despatch that has just come. When Fenton found it, I was so engrossed by this pretty face that I have done nothing but gaze at it.'

'And what was it that seemed so incredible as I came in?'

'Simply this, then, that any one should be so beautiful.'

'Titian seems to have solved that point; at least, Vasari tells us this was a portrait of a lady of the Guicciardini family.'

'I know—I know that,' said she impatiently; 'and we do see faces in which Titian or Velasquez have stamped nobility and birth as palpably as they have printed loveliness and expression. And such were these women, daughters in a long line of the proud Patricians who once ruled Rome.'

'And yet,' said he slowly, 'that portrait has its living counterpart.'

'I am aware of whom you speak: the awkward, angular girl we all saw at Rome, whom young gentlemen called the Tizziana.'

'She is certainly no longer awkward, nor angular, now, if she were once so, which I do not remember. She is a model of grace and symmetry, and as much more beautiful than that picture as colour, expression, and movement are better than a lifeless image.'

'There is the fervour of a lover in your words, Cecil,' said she, smiling faintly.

'It is not often I am so forgetful,' muttered he; 'but so it is, our cousinship has done it all, Maude. One revels in expansiveness with his own, and I can speak to you as I cannot speak to another.'

'It is a great flattery to me.'

'In fact, I feel that at last I have a sister—a dear and loving spirit who will give to true friendship those delightful traits of

pity and tenderness, and even forgiveness, of which only the woman's nature can know the needs.'

Lady Maude rose slowly, without a word. Nothing of heightened colour or movement of her features indicated anger or indignation, and though Walpole stood with an affected submissiveness before her, he marked her closely.

'I am sure, Maude,' continued he, 'you must often have wished to have a brother.'

'Never so much as at this moment!' said she calmly—and now she had reached the door. 'If I had had a brother, Cecil Walpole, it is possible I might have been spared this insult!'

The next moment the door closed, and Walpole was alone.

CHAPTER LXVI

ATLEE'S MESSAGE

'I AM right, Maude,' said Lord Danesbury as his niece re-entered the drawing-room. 'This is from Atlee, who is at Athens; but why there I cannot make out as yet. There are, according to the book, two explanations here. 491 means a white dromedary or the chief clerk, and B+49=12 stands for our envoy in Greece or a snuffer-dish.'

'Don't you think, my lord, it would be better for you to send this up to Cecil? He has just come in. He has had much experience of these things.'

'You are quite right, Maude; let Fenton take it up and beg for a speedy transcript of it. I should like to see it at once!'

While his lordship waited for his despatch, he grumbled away about everything that occurred to him, and even, at last, about the presence of the very man, Walpole, who was at that same moment engaged in serving him.'

'Stupid fellow,' muttered he, 'why does he ask for extension of his leave? Staying in town here is only another name for spending money. He'll have to go out at last; better do it at once!'

'He may have his own reasons, my lord, for delay,' said Maude, rather to suggest further discussion of the point.

'He may think he has, I've no doubt. These small creatures have always scores of irons in the fire. So it was when I agreed to go to Ireland. There were innumerable fine things and clever things he was to do. There were schemes by which "the Cardinal" was to be cajoled, and the whole Bar bamboozled.

Every one was to have office dangled before his eyes, and to be treated so confidentially and affectionately, under disappointment, that even when a man got nothing he would feel he had secured the regard of the Prime Minister! If I took him out to Turkey to-morrow, he'd never be easy till he had a plan "to square" the Grand-Vizier, and entrap Gortchakoff or Miliutin. These men don't know that a clever fellow no more goes in search of rogueries than a foxhunter looks out for stiff fences. You "take them" when they lie before you, that's all.' This little burst of indignation seemed to have the effect on him of a little wholesome exercise, for he appeared to feel himself better and easier after it.

'Dear me! dear me!' muttered he, 'how pleasant one's life might be if it were not for the clever fellows! I mean, of course,' added he, after a second or two, 'the clever fellows who want to impress us with their cleverness.'

Maude would not be entrapped or enticed into what might lead to a discussion. She never uttered a word, and he was silent.

It was in the perfect stillness that followed that Walpole entered the room with the telegram in his hand, and advanced to where Lord Danesbury was sitting.

'I believe, my lord, I have made out this message in such a shape as will enable *you* to divine what it means. It runs thus: "*Athens, 5th, 12 o'clock. Have seen S——, and conferred at length with him. His estimate of value,*" or "*his price*"—for the signs will mean either—"*to my thinking enormous. His reasonings certainly strong and not easy to rebut.*" That may be possibly rendered, "*demands that might probably be reduced.*" "*I leave to-day, and shall be in England by middle of next week.*—ATLEE."'

Walpole looked keenly at the other's face as he read the paper, to mark what signs of interest and eagerness the tidings might evoke. There was, however, nothing to be read in those cold and quiet features.

'I am glad he is coming back,' said he at length. 'Let us see: he can reach Marseilles by Monday, or even Sunday night. I don't see why he should not be here Wednesday, or Thursday at farthest. By the way, Cecil, tell me something about our friend—who is he?'

'Don't know, my lord.'

'Don't know! How came you acquainted with him?'

'Met him at a country-house, where I happened to break my arm, and took advantage of this young fellow's skill in surgery

Walpole looked keenly at the other's face as he read the paper.

to engage his services to carry me to town. There 's the whole of it.'

'Is he a surgeon?'

'No, my lord, any more than he is fifty other things, of which he has a smattering.'

'Has he any means—any private fortune?'

'I suspect not.'

'Who and what are his family? Are there Atlees in Ireland?'

'There may be, my lord. There was an Atlee, a college porter, in Dublin; but I heard our friend say that they were only distantly related.'

He could not help watching Lady Maude as he said this, and was rejoiced to see a sudden twitch of her lower lip as if in pain.

'You evidently sent him over to me, then, on a very meagre knowledge of the man,' said his lordship rebukingly.

'I believe, my lord, I said at the time that I had by me a clever fellow, who wrote a good hand, could copy correctly, and was sufficient of a gentleman in his manners to make intercourse with him easy, and not disagreeable.'

'A very guarded recommendation,' said Lady Maude, with a smile.

'Was it not, Maude?' continued he, his eyes flashing with triumphant insolence.

'*I* found he could do more than copy a despatch—I found he could write one. He replied to an article in the *Edinburgh* on Turkey, and I saw him write it as I did not know there was another man but myself in England could have done.'

'Perhaps your lordship had talked over the subject in his presence, or with him?'

'And if I had, sir? and if all his knowledge on a complex question was such as he could carry away from a random conversation, what a gifted dog he must be to sift the wheat from the chaff—to strip a question of what were mere accidental elements, and to test a difficulty by its real qualities. Atlee is a clever fellow, an able fellow, I assure you. That very telegram before us is a proof how he can deal with a matter on which instruction would be impossible.'

'Indeed, my lord!' said Walpole, with well-assumed innocence.

'I am right glad to know he is coming home. He must demolish that writer in the *Revue des Deux Mondes* at once—some unprincipled French blackguard, who has been put up to attack me by Thouvenel!'

Would it have appeased his lordship's wrath to know that the writer of this defamatory article was no other than Joe Atlee

himself, and that the reply which was to 'demolish it' was more than half-written in his desk at that moment?

'I shall ask,' continued my lord, 'I shall ask him, besides, to write a paper on Ireland, and that fiasco of yours, Cecil.'

'Much obliged, my lord!'

'Don't be angry or indignant! A fellow with a neat, light hand like Atlee can, even under the guise of allegation, do more to clear you than scores of vulgar apologists. He can, at least, show that what our distinguished head of the Cabinet calls "the flesh-and-blood argument," has its full weight with us in our government of Ireland, and that our bitterest enemies cannot say we have no sympathies with the nation we rule over.'

'I suspect, my lord, that what you have so graciously called *my* fiasco is well-nigh forgotten by this time, and wiser policy would say, "Do not revive it."'

'There's a great policy in saying in "an article" all that could be said in "a debate," and showing, after all, how little it comes to. Even the feeble grievance-mongers grow ashamed at retailing the review and the newspapers; but, what is better still, if the article be smartly written, they are sure to mistake the peculiarities of style for points in the argument. I have seen some splendid blunders of that kind when I sat in the Lower House! I wish Atlee was in Parliament.'

'I am not aware that he can speak, my lord.'

'Neither am I; but I should risk a small bet on it. He is a ready fellow, and the ready fellows are many-sided—eh, Maude?' Now, though his lordship only asked for his niece's concurrence in his own sage remark, Walpole affected to understand it as a direct appeal to her opinion of Atlee, and said, 'Is that your judgment of this gentleman, Maude?'

'I have no prescription to measure the abilities of such men as Mr. Atlee.'

'You find him pleasant, witty, and agreeable, I hope?' said he, with a touch of sarcasm.

'Yes, I think so.'

'With an admirable memory and great readiness for an *apropos*?'

'Perhaps he has.'

'As a retailer of an incident they tell me he has no rival.'

'I cannot say.'

'Of course not. I take it the fellow has tact enough not to tell stories here.'

'What is all that you are saying there?' cried his lordship, to whom these few sentences were an 'aside.'

'Cecil is praising Mr. Atlee, my lord,' said Maude bluntly.

'I did not know I had been, my lord,' said he. 'He belongs to that class of men who interest me very little.'

'What class may that be?'

'The adventurers, my lord. The fellows who make the campaign of life on the faith that they shall find their rations in some other man's knapsack.'

'Ha! indeed. Is that our friend's line?'

'Most undoubtedly, my lord. I am ashamed to say that it was entirely my own fault if you are saddled with the fellow at all.'

'I do not see the infliction——'

'I mean, my lord, that, in a measure, I put him on you without very well knowing what it was that I did.'

'Have you heard—do you know anything of the man that should inspire caution or distrust?'

'Well, these are strong words,' muttered he hesitatingly.

But Lady Maude broke in with a passionate tone, 'Don't you see, my lord, that he does not know anything to this person's disadvantage; that it is only my cousin's diplomatic reserve—that commendable caution of his order—suggests his careful conduct? Cecil knows no more of Atlee than we do.'

'Perhaps not so much,' said Walpole, with an impertinent simper.

'*I* know,' said his lordship, 'that he is a monstrous clever fellow. He can find you the passage you want or the authority you are seeking for at the moment; and when he writes, he can be rapid and concise too.'

'He has many rare gifts, my lord,' said Walpole, with the sly air of one who had said a covert impertinence. 'I am very curious to know what you mean to do with him.'

'Mean to do with him? Why, what should I mean to do with him?'

'The very point I wish to learn. A protégé, my lord, is a parasitic plant, and you cannot deprive it of its double instincts —to cling and to climb.'

'How witty my cousin has become since his sojourn in Ireland,' said Maude.

Walpole flushed deeply, and for a moment he seemed about to reply angrily; but, with an effort, he controlled himself, and turning towards the timepiece on the chimney, said, 'How late! I could not have believed it was past one! I hope, my lord, I have made your despatch intelligible?'

'Yes, yes; I think so. Besides, he will be here in a day or two to explain.'

'I shall, then, say good-night, my lord. Good-night, Cousin Maude.' But Lady Maude had already left the room unnoticed.

CHAPTER LXVII

WALPOLE ALONE

Once more in his own room, Walpole returned to the task of that letter to Nina Kostalergi, of which he had made nigh fifty drafts, and not one with which he was satisfied.

It was not really very easy to do what he wished. He desired to seem a warm, rapturous, impulsive lover, who had no thought in life—no other hope or ambition—than the success of his suit. He sought to show that she had so enraptured and enthralled him that, until she consented to share his fortunes, he was a man utterly lost to life and life's ambitions; and while insinuating what a tremendous responsibility she would take on herself if she should venture by a refusal of him to rob the world of those abilities that the age could ill spare, he also dimly shadowed the natural pride a woman ought to feel in knowing that she was asked to be the partner of such a man, and that one, for whom destiny in all likelihood reserved the highest rewards of public life, was then, with the full consciousness of what he was, and what awaited him, ready to share that proud eminence with her, as a prince might have offered to share his throne.

In spite of himself, in spite of all he could do, it was on this latter part of his letter his pen ran most freely. He could condense his raptures, he could control in most praiseworthy fashion all the extravagances of passion and the imaginative joys of love, but, for the life of him, he could abate nothing of the triumphant ecstasy that must be the feeling of the woman who had won him—the passionate delight of her who should be his wife, and enter life the chosen one of his affection.

It was wonderful how glibly he could insist on this to himself; and fancying for the moment that he was one of the outer world commenting on the match, say, 'Yes, let people decry the Walpole class how they might—they are elegant, they are exclusive, they are fastidious, they are all that you like to call the spoiled children of Fortune in their wit, their brilliancy, and their readiness, but they are the only men, the only men in the world, who marry—we'll not say for "love," for the phrase is vulgar—but who marry to please themselves! This girl had not a shilling. As to family, all is said when we say she was a Greek! Is there

not something downright chivalrous in marrying such a woman? Is it the act of a worldly man?'

He walked the room, uttering this question to himself over and over. Not exactly that he thought disparagingly of worldliness and material advantages, but he had lashed himself into a false enthusiasm as to qualities which he thought had some special worshippers of their own, and whose good opinion might possibly be turned to profit somehow and somewhere, if he only knew how and where. It was a monstrous fine thing he was about to do; that he felt. Where was there another man in his position would take a portionless girl and make her his wife. Cadets and cornets in light-dragoon regiments did these things: they liked their 'bit of beauty'; and there was a sort of mock-poetry about these creatures that suited that sort of thing; but for a man who wrote his letters from Brookes's, and whose dinner invitations included all that was great in town, to stoop to such an alliance was as bold a defiance as one could throw at a world of self-seeking and conventionality.

'That Emperor of the French did it,' cried he. 'I cannot recall to my mind another. He did the very same thing I am going to do. To be sure, he had the "pull on me" in one point. As he said himself, "*I* am a parvenu." Now, *I* cannot go that far! I must justify my act on other grounds, as I hope I can do,' cried he, after a pause; while, with head erect and swelling chest, he went on: 'I felt within me the place I yet should occupy. I knew—ay, knew—the prize that awaited me, and I asked myself, "Do you see in any capital of Europe one woman with whom you would like to share this fortune? Is there one sufficiently gifted and graceful to make her elevation seem a natural and fitting promotion, and herself appear the appropriate occupant of the station?"

'She is wonderfully beautiful: there is no doubt of it. Such beauty as they have never seen here in their lives! Fanciful extravagances in dress, and atrocious hair-dressing, cannot disfigure her; and by Jove! she has tried both. And one has only to imagine that woman dressed and "coiffëed," as she might be, to conceive such a triumph as London has not witnessed for the century! And I do long for such a triumph. If my lord would only invite us here, were it but for a week! We should be asked to Goreham and the Bexsmiths'. My lady never omits to invite a great beauty. It's *her* way to protest that she is still handsome, and not at all jealous. How are we to get "asked" to Bruton Street?' asked he over and over, as though the sounds must secure the answer. 'Maude will never permit it. The

unlucky picture has settled *that* point. Maude will not suffer her to cross the threshold! But for the portrait I could bespeak my cousin's favour and indulgence for a somewhat countrified young girl, dowdy and awkward. I could plead for her good looks in that *ad misericordiam* fashion that disarms jealousy and enlists her generosity for a humble connection she need never see more of! If I could only persuade Maude that I had done an indiscretion, and that I knew it, I should be sure of her friendship. Once make her believe that I have gone clean head over heels into a *mésalliance*, and our honeymoon here is assured. I wish I had not tormented her about Atlee. I wish with all my heart I had kept my impertinences to myself, and gone no further than certain dark hints about what I could say, if I were to be evil-minded. What rare wisdom it is not to fire away one's last cartridge. I suppose it is too late now. She'll not forgive me that disparagement before my uncle; that is, if there be anything between herself and Atlee, a point which a few minutes will settle when I see them together. It would not be very difficult to make Atlee regard me as his friend, and as one ready to aid him in this same ambition. Of course he is prepared to see in me the enemy of all his plans. What would he not give, or say, or do, to find me his aider and abettor? Shrewd tactician as the fellow is, he will know all the value of having an accomplice within the fortress; and it would be exactly from a man like myself he might be disposed to expect the most resolute opposition.'

He thought for a long time over this. He turned it over and over in his mind, canvassing all the various benefits any line of action might promise, and starting every doubt or objection he could imagine. Nor was the thought extraneous to his calculations that in forwarding Atlee's suit to Maude he was exacting the heaviest 'vendetta' for her refusal of himself.

'There is not a woman in Europe,' he exclaimed, 'less fitted to encounter small means and a small station—to live a life of petty economies, and be the daily associate of a snob!'

'What the fellow may become at the end of the race—what place he may win after years of toil and jobbery, I neither know nor care! *She* will be an old woman by that time, and will have had space enough in the interval to mourn over her rejection of me. I shall be a Minister, not impossibly at some court of the Continent; Atlee, to say the best, an Under-Secretary of State for something, or Poor-Law or Education Chief. There will be just enough of disparity in our stations to fill her woman's heart with bitterness—the bitterness of having backed the wrong man!

'The unavailing regrets that beset us for not having taken the left-hand road in life instead of the right are our chief mental resources after forty, and they tell me that we men only know half the poignancy of these miserable recollections. Women have a special adaptiveness for this kind of torture — would seem actually to revel in it.'

He turned once more to his desk, and to the letter. Somehow he could make nothing of it. All the dangers that he desired to avoid so cramped his ingenuity that he could say little beyond platitudes; and he thought with terror of her who was to read them. The scornful contempt with which *she* would treat such a letter was all before him, and he snatched up the paper and tore it in pieces.

'It must not be done by writing,' cried he at last. 'Who is to guess for which of the fifty moods of such a woman a man's letter is to be composed? What you could say *now* you dared not have written half an hour ago. What would have gone far to gain her love yesterday, to-day will show you the door! It is only by consummate address and skill she can be approached at all, and without her look and bearing, the inflections of her voice, her gestures, her "pose," to guide you, it would be utter rashness to risk her humour.'

He suddenly bethought him at this moment that he had many things to do in Ireland ere he left England. He had tradesmen's bills to settle, and 'traps' to be got rid of. 'Traps' included furniture, and books, and horses, and horse-gear: details which at first he had hoped his friend Lockwood would have taken off his hands; but Lockwood had only written him word that a Jew broker from Liverpool would give him forty pounds for his house effects, and as for 'the screws,' there was nothing but an auction.

Most of us have known at some period or other of our lives what it is to suffer from the painful disparagement our chattels undergo when they become objects of sale; but no adverse criticism of your bed or your bookcase, your ottoman or your arm-chair, can approach the sense of pain inflicted by the impertinent comments on your horse. Every imputed blemish is a distinct personality, and you reject the insinuated spavin, or the suggested splint, as imputations on your honour as a gentleman. In fact, you are pushed into the pleasant dilemma of either being ignorant as to the defects of your beast, or wilfully bent on an act of palpable dishonesty. When we remember that every confession a man makes of his unacquaintance with matters 'horsy' is, in English acceptance, a count in the indictment against his claim to be thought a gentleman, it is not surprising

that there will be men more ready to hazard their characters than their connoisseurship.

'I'll go over myself to Ireland,' said he at last; 'and a week will do everything.'

CHAPTER LXVIII

THOUGHTS ON MARRIAGE

Lockwood was seated at his fireside in his quarters, the Upper Castle Yard, when Walpole burst in upon him unexpectedly.

'What! you here?' cried the Major. 'Have *you* the courage to face Ireland again?'

'I see nothing that should prevent my coming here. Ireland certainly cannot pretend to lay a grievance to my charge.'

'Maybe not. I don't understand these things. I only know what people say in the clubs and laugh over at dinner-tables.'

'I cannot affect to be very sensitive as to these Celtic criticisms, and I shall not ask you to recall them.'

'They say that Danesbury got kicked out, all for your blunders!'

'Do they?' said Walpole innocently.

'Yes; and they declare that if old Daney wasn't the most loyal fellow breathing, he'd have thrown you over, and owned that the whole mess was of your own brewing, and that he had nothing to do with it.'

'Do they, indeed, say that?'

'That's not half of it, for they have a story about a woman—some woman you met down at Kilgobbin—who made you sing rebel songs and take a Fenian pledge, and give your word of honour that Donogan should be let escape.'

'Is that all?'

'Isn't it enough? A man must be a glutton for tomfoolery if he could not be satisfied with that.'

'Perhaps you never heard that the chief of the Cabinet took a very different view of my Irish policy.'

'Irish policy?' cried the other, with lifted eyebrows.

'I said Irish policy, and repeat the words. Whatever line of political action tends to bring legislation into more perfect harmony with the instincts and impulses of a very peculiar people, it is no presumption to call a policy.'

'With all my heart. Do you mean to deal with that old Liverpool rascal for the furniture?'

'His offer is almost an insult.'

'Well, you'll be gratified to know he retracts it. He says now he'll only give £35! And as for the screws, Bobbidge, of the Carbineers, will take them both for £50.'

'Why, Lightfoot alone is worth the money!'

'Minus the sand-crack.'

'I deny the sand-crack. She was pricked in the shoeing.'

'Of course! I never knew a broken knee that wasn't got by striking the manger, nor a sand-crack that didn't come of an awkward smith.'

'What a blessing it would be if all the bad reputations in society could be palliated as pleasantly.'

'Shall I tell Bobbidge you take his offer? He wants an answer at once.'

'My dear Major, don't you know that the fellow who says that, simply means to say: "Don't be too sure that I shall not change my mind." Look out that you take the ball at the hop!'

'Lucky if it hops at all.'

'Is that your experience of life?' said Walpole inquiringly.

'It is one of them. Will you take £50 for the screws?'

'Yes; and as much more for the brake and the dog-cart. I want every rap I can scrape together, Harry. I'm going out to Guatemala.'

'I heard that.'

'Infernal place; at least, I believe, in climate—reptiles, fevers, assassination—it stands without a rival.'

'So they tell me.'

'It was the only thing vacant; and they rather affected a difficulty about giving it.'

'So they do when they send a man to the Gold Coast; and they tell the newspapers to say what a lucky dog he is.'

'I can stand all that. What really kills me is giving a man the C.B. when he is just booked for some home of yellow fever.'

'They do that too,' gravely observed the other, who was beginning to feel the pace of the conversation rather too fast for him. 'Don't you smoke?'

'I'm rather reducing myself to half batta in tobacco. I've thoughts of marrying.'

'Don't do that.'

'Why? It's not wrong.'

'No, perhaps not; but it's stupid.'

'Come now, old fellow, life out there in the tropics is not so jolly all alone! Alligators are interesting creatures, and cheetahs are pretty pets; but a man wants a little companionship of a more tender kind; and a nice girl who would link her fortunes

with one's own, and help one through the sultry hours, is no bad thing.'

'The nice girl wouldn't go there.'

'I 'm not so sure of that. With your great knowledge of life, you must know that there has been a glut in "the nice-girl" market these years back. Prime lots are sold for a song occasionally, and first-rate samples sent as far as Calcutta. The truth is, the fellow who looks like a real buyer may have the pick of the fair, as they call it here.'

'So he ought,' growled out the major.

'The speech is not a gallant one. You are scarcely complimentary to the ladies, Lockwood.'

'It was you that talked of a woman like a cow, or a sack of corn, not I.'

'I employed an illustration to answer one of your own arguments.'

'Who is she to be?' bluntly asked the major.

'I 'll tell you whom I mean to ask, for I have not put the question yet.'

A long, fine whistle expressed the other's astonishment. 'And are you so sure she 'll say Yes?'

'I have no other assurance than the conviction that a woman might do worse.'

'Humph! perhaps she might. I 'm not quite certain; but who is she to be?'

'Do you remember a visit we made together to a certain Kilgobbin Castle.'

'To be sure I do. A rum old ruin it was.'

'Do you remember two young ladies we met there?'

'Perfectly. Are you going to marry both of them?'

'My intention is to propose to one, and I imagine I need not tell you which?'

'Naturally, the Irish girl. She saved your life——'

'Pray let me undeceive you in a double error. It is not the Irish girl; nor did she save my life.'

'Perhaps not; but she risked her own to save yours. You said so yourself at the time.'

'We 'll not discuss the point now. I hope I feel duly grateful for the young lady's heroism, though it is not exactly my intention to record my gratitude in a special licence.'

'A very equivocal sort of repayment,' grumbled out Lockwood.

'You are epigrammatic this evening, major.'

'So, then, it 's the Greek you mean to marry?'

'It is the Greek I mean to ask.'

'All right. I hope she'll take you. I think, on the whole, you suit each other. If I were at all disposed to that sort of bondage, I don't know a girl I'd rather risk the road with than the Irish cousin, Miss Kearney.'

'She is very pretty, exceedingly obliging, and has most winning manners.'

'She is good-tempered, and she is natural—the two best things a woman can be.'

'Why not come down along with me and try your luck?'

'When do you go?'

'By the 10.30 train to-morrow. I shall arrive at Moate by four o'clock, and reach the castle to dinner.'

'They expect you?'

'Only so far, that I have telegraphed a line to say I'm going down to bid "Good-bye" before I sail for Guatemala. I don't suspect they know where that is, but it's enough when they understand it is far away.'

'I'll go with you.'

'Will you really?'

'I will. I'll not say on such an errand as your own, because that requires a second thought or two; but I'll reconnoitre, Master Cecil, I'll reconnoitre.'

'I suppose you know there is no money.'

'I should think money most unlikely in such a quarter; and it's better she should have none than a small fortune. I'm an old whist-player, and when I play dummy, there's nothing I hate more than to see two or three small trumps in my partner's hand.'

'I imagine you'll not be distressed in that way here.'

'I've got enough to come through with; that is, the thing can be done if there be no extravagances.'

'Does one want for more?' cried Walpole theatrically.

'I don't know that. If it were only ask and have, I should like to be tempted.'

'I have no such ambition. I firmly believe that the moderate limits a man sets to his daily wants constitute the real liberty of his intellect and his intellectual nature.'

'Perhaps I've no intellectual nature, then,' growled out Lockwood, 'for I know how I should like to spend fifteen thousand a year. I suppose I shall have to live on as many hundreds.'

'It can be done.'

'Perhaps it may. Have another weed?'

'No. I told you already I have begun a tobacco reformation.'

'Does she object to the pipe?'

'I cannot tell you. The fact is, Lockwood, my future and its fortunes are just as uncertain as your own. This day week will probably have decided the destiny of each of us.'

'To our success, then!' cried the major, filling both their glasses.

'To our success!' said Walpole, as he drained his, and placed it upside down on the table.

CHAPTER LXIX

AT KILGOBBIN CASTLE

The 'Blue Goat' at Moate was destined once more to receive the same travellers whom we presented to our readers at a very early stage of this history.

'Not much change here,' cried Lockwood, as he strode into the little sitting-room and sat down. 'I miss the old fellow's picture, that's all.'

'Ah! by the way,' said Walpole to the landlord, 'you had my Lord Kilgobbin's portrait up there the last time I came through here.'

'Yes, indeed, sir,' said the man, smoothing down his hair and looking apologetically. 'But the Goats and my lord, who was the Buck Goat, got into a little disagreement, and they sent away his picture, and his lordship retired from the club, and—and—that was the way of it.'

'A heavy blow to your town, I take it,' said the major, as he poured out his beer.

'Well, indeed, your honour, I won't say it was. You see, sir, times is changed in Ireland. We don't care as much as we used about the "neighbouring gentry," as they called them once; and as for the lord, there! he doesn't spend a hundred a year in Moate.'

'How is that?'

'They get what they want by rail from Dublin, your honour; and he might as well not be here at all.'

'Can we have a car to carry us over to the castle?' asked Walpole, who did not care to hear more of local grievances.

'Sure, isn't my lord's car waiting for you since two o'clock!' said the host spitefully, for he was not conciliated by a courtesy that was to lose him a fifteen-shilling fare. 'Not that there's much of a horse between the shafts, or that old Daly himself is

an elegant coachman,' continued the host; 'but they're ready in the yard when you want them.'

The travellers had no reason to delay them in their present quarters, and taking their places on the car, set out for the castle.

'I scarcely thought when I last drove this road,' said Walpole, 'that the next time I was to come should be on such an errand as my present one.'

'Humph!' ejaculated the other. 'Our noble relative that is to be does not shine in equipage. That beast is dead lame.'

'If we had our deserts, Lockwood, we should be drawn by a team of doves, with the god Cupid on the box.'

'I'd rather have two posters and a yellow postchaise.'

A drizzling rain that now began to fall interrupted all conversation, and each sank back into his own thoughts for the rest of the way.

Lord Kilgobbin, with his daughter at his side, watched the car from the terrace of the castle as it slowly wound its way along the bog road.

'As well as I can see, Kate, there is a man on each side of the car,' said Kearney, as he handed his field-glass to his daughter.

'Yes, papa, I see there are two travellers.'

'And I don't well know why there should be even one! There was no such great friendship between us that he need come all this way to bid us good-bye.'

'Considering the mishap that befell him here, it is a mark of good feeling to desire to see us all once more, don't you think so?

'May be so,' muttered he drearily. 'At all events, it's not a pleasant house he's coming to. Young O'Shea there upstairs, just out of a fever; and old Miss Betty, that may arrive any moment.'

'There's no question of that. She says it would be ten days or a fortnight before she is equal to the journey.'

'Heaven grant it!—hem—I mean that she'll be strong enough for it by that time. At all events, if it is the same as to our fine friend, Mr. Walpole, I wish he'd have taken his leave of us in a letter.'

'It is something new, papa, to see you so inhospitable.'

'But I am not inhospitable, Kitty. Show me the good fellow that would like to pass an evening with me and think me good company, and he shall have the best saddle of mutton and the raciest bottle of claret in the house. But it's only mock-hospitality to be entertaining the man that only comes out of courtesy and just stays as long as good manners oblige him.'

'I do not know that I should undervalue politeness, especially when it takes the shape of a recognition.'

'Well, be it so,' sighed he, almost drearily. 'If the young gentleman is so warmly attached to us all that he cannot tear himself away till he has embraced us, I suppose there's no help for it. Where is Nina?'

'She was reading to Gorman when I saw her. She had just relieved Dick, who has gone out for a walk.'

'A jolly house for a visitor to come to!' cried he sarcastically.

'We are not very gay or lively, it is true, papa; but it is not unlikely that the spirit in which our guest comes here will not need much jollity.'

'I don't take it as a kindness for a man to bring me his depression and his low spirits. I've always more of my own than I know what to do with. Two sorrows never made a joy, Kitty.'

'There! they are lighting the lamps,' cried she suddenly. 'I don't think they can be more than three miles away.'

'Have you rooms ready, if there be two coming?'

'Yes, papa, Mr. Walpole will have his old quarters; and the stag room is in readiness if there be another guest.'

'I'd like to have a house as big as the royal barracks, and every room of it occupied!' cried Kearney with a mellow ring in his voice. 'They talk of society and pleasant company; but for real enjoyment there's nothing to compare with what a man has under his own roof! No claret ever tastes so good as the decanter he circulates himself. I was low enough half an hour ago, and now the mere thought of a couple of fellows to dine with me cheers me up and warms my heart! I'll give them the green seal, Kitty; and I don't know there's another house in the county could put a bottle of '46 claret before them.'

'So you shall, papa. I'll go to the cellar myself and fetch it.'

Kearney hastened to make the moderate toilet he called dressing for dinner, and was only finished when his old servant informed him that two gentlemen had arrived and gone up to their rooms.

'I wish it was two dozen had come,' said Kearney, as he descended to the drawing-room.

'It is Major Lockwood, papa,' cried Kate, entering and drawing him into a window-recess; 'the Major Lockwood that was here before, has come with Mr. Walpole. I met him in the hall while I had the basket with the wine in my hand, and he was so cordial and glad to see me you cannot think.'

'He knew that green wax, Kitty. He tasted that "bin" when he was here last.'

'Perhaps so; but he certainly seemed overjoyed at something.'

'Let me see,' muttered he, 'wasn't he the big fellow with the long moustaches?'

'A tall, very good-looking man; dark as a Spaniard, and not unlike one.'

'To be sure, to be sure. I remember him well. He was a capital shot with the pistol, and he liked his wine. By the way, Nina did not take to him.'

'How do you remember that, papa?' said she archly.

'If I don't mistake, she told me so, or she called him a brute, or a savage, or some one of those things a man is sure to be, when a woman discovers he will not be her slave.'

Nina entering at the moment cut short all rejoinder, and Kearney came forward to meet her with his hand out.

'Shake out your lower courses, and let me look at you,' cried he, as he walked round her admiringly. 'Upon my oath, it's more beautiful than ever you are! I can guess what a fate is reserved for those dandies from Dublin.'

'Do you like my dress, sir? Is it becoming?' asked she.

'Becoming it is; but I'm not sure whether I like it.'

'And how is that, sir?'

'I don't see how, with all that floating gauze and swelling lace, a man is to get an arm round you at all——'

'I cannot perceive the necessity, sir,' and the insolent toss of her head, more forcibly even than her words, resented such a possibility.

CHAPTER LXX

ATLEE'S RETURN

When Atlee arrived at Bruton Street, the welcome that met him was almost cordial. Lord Danesbury—not very demonstrative at any time—received him with warmth, and Lady Maude gave him her hand with a sort of significant cordiality that overwhelmed him with delight. The climax of his enjoyment was, however, reached when Lord Danesbury said to him, 'We are glad to see you at home again.'

This speech sank deep into his heart, and he never wearied of repeating it over and over to himself. When he reached his room, where his luggage had already preceded him, and found his dressing articles laid out, and all the little cares and attentions which well-trained servants understand awaiting him, he muttered, with

a tremulous sort of ecstasy, 'This is a very glorious way to come home!'

The rich furniture of the room, the many appliances of luxury and ease around him, the sense of rest and quiet, so delightful after a journey, all appealed to him as he threw himself into a deep-cushioned chair. He cried aloud, 'Home! home! Is this indeed home? What a different thing from that mean life of privation and penury I have always been associating with this word—from that perpetual struggle with debt—the miserable conflict that went on through every day, till not an action, not a thought, remained untinctured with money, and if a momentary pleasure crossed the path, the cost of it as certain to tarnish all the enjoyment! Such was the only home I have ever known, or indeed imagined.'

It is said that the men who have emerged from very humble conditions in life, and occupy places of eminence or promise, are less overjoyed at this change of fortune than impressed with a kind of resentment towards the destiny that once had subjected them to privation. Their feeling is not so much joy at the present as discontent with the past.

'Why was I not born to all this?' cried Atlee indignantly. 'What is there in me, or in my nature, that this should be a usurpation? Why was I not schooled at Eton, and trained at Oxford? Why was I not bred up amongst the men whose competitor I shall soon find myself? Why have I not their ways, their instincts, their watchwords, their pastimes, and even their prejudices, as parts of my very nature? Why am I to learn these late in life, as a man learns a new language, and never fully catches the sounds or the niceties? Is there any competitorship I should flinch from, any rivalry I should fear, if I had but started fair in the race?'

This sense of having been hardly treated by Fortune at the outset, marred much of his present enjoyment, accompanied as it was by a misgiving that, do what he might, that early inferiority would cling to him, like some rag of a garment that he must wear over all his 'braverie,' proclaiming as it did to the world, 'This is from what I sprung originally.'

It was not by any exercise of vanity that Atlee knew he talked better, knew more, was wittier and more ready-witted than the majority of men of his age and standing. The consciousness that he could do scores of things *they* could not do was not enough, tarnished as it was by a misgiving that, by some secret mystery of breeding, some freemasonry of fashion, he was not one of them, and that this awkward fact was suspended over him for life, to

arrest his course in the hour of success, and balk him at the very moment of victory.

'Till a man's adoption amongst them is ratified by a marriage, he is not safe,' muttered he. 'Till the fate and future of one of their own is embarked in the same boat with himself, they'll not grieve over his shipwreck.'

Could he but call Lady Maude his wife! Was this possible? There were classes in which affections went for much, where there was such a thing as engaging these same affections, and actually pledging all hope of happiness in life on the faith of such engagements. These, it is true, were the sentiments that prevailed in humbler walks of life, amongst those lowly-born people whose births and marriages were not chronicled in gilt-bound volumes. The Lady Maudes of the world, whatever imprudences they might permit themselves, certainly never 'fell in love.' Condition and place in the world were far too serious things to be made the sport of sentiment. Love was a very proper thing in three-volume novels, and Mr. Mudie drove a roaring trade in it; but in the well-bred world, immersed in all its engagements, triple-deep in its projects and promises for pleasure, where was the time, where the opportunity, for this pleasant fooling? That luxurious selfishness in which people delight to plan a future life, and agree to think that they have in themselves what can confront narrow fortune and difficulty—these had no place in the lives of persons of fashion! In that coquetry of admiration and flattery which in the language of slang is called spooning, young persons occasionally got so far acquainted that they agreed to be married, pretty much as they agreed to waltz or to polka together; but it was always with the distinct understanding that they were doing what mammas would approve of, and family solicitors of good conscience could ratify. No tyrannical sentimentality, no uncontrollable gush of sympathy, no irresistible convictions about all future happiness being dependent on one issue, overbore these natures, and made them insensible to title, and rank, and station, and settlements.

In one word, Atlee, after due consideration, satisfied his mind that, though a man might gain the affections of the doctor's daughter or the squire's niece, and so establish him as an element of her happiness that friends would overlook all differences of fortune, and try to make some sort of compromise with Fate, all these were unsuited to the sphere in which Lady Maude moved. It was, indeed, a realm where this coinage did not circulate. To enable him to address her with any prospect of success, he should be able to show—ay and to show argumentatively—that she was,

in listening to him, about to do something eminently prudent and worldly-wise. She must, in short, be in a position to show her friends and 'society' that she had not committed herself to anything wilful or foolish—had not been misled by a sentiment or betrayed by a sympathy; and that the well-bred questioner who inquired, 'Why did she marry Atlee?' should be met by an answer satisfactory and convincing.

In the various ways he canvassed the question and revolved it with himself, there was one consideration which, if I were at all concerned for his character for gallantry, I should be reluctant to reveal; but as I feel little interest on this score, I am free to own was this. He remembered that as Lady Maude was no longer in her first youth, there was reason to suppose she might listen to addresses now which, some years ago, would have met scant favour in her eyes.

In the matrimonial Lloyd's, if there were such a body, she would not have figured A. No. 1; and the risks of entering the conjugal state have probably called for an extra premium. Atlee attached great importance to this fact; but it was not the less a matter which demanded the greatest delicacy of treatment. He must know it, and he must not know it. He must see that she had been the belle of many seasons, and he must pretend to regard her as fresh to the ways of life, and new to society. He trusted a good deal to his tact to do this, for while insinuating to her the possible future of such a man as himself—the high place, and the great rewards which, in all likelihood, awaited him—there would come an opportune moment to suggest, that to any one less gifted, less conversant with knowledge of life than herself, such reasonings could not be addressed.

'It could never be,' cried he aloud: 'to some miss fresh from the schoolroom and the governess, I could dare to talk a language only understood by those who have been conversant with high questions, and moved in the society of thoughtful talkers.'

There is no quality so dangerous to eulogise as experience, and Atlee thought long over this. One determination or another must speedily be come to. If there was no likelihood of success with Lady Maude, he must not lose his chances with the Greek girl. The sum, whatever it might be, which her father should obtain for his secret papers, would constitute a very respectable portion. 'I have a stronger reason to fight for liberal terms,' thought he, 'than the Prince Kostalergi imagines; and, fortunately, that fine parental trait, that noble desire to make a provision for his child, stands out so clearly in my brief, I should be a sorry advocate if I could not employ it.'

In the few words that passed between Lord Danesbury and himself on arriving, he learned that there was but little chance of winning his election for the borough. Indeed, he bore the disappointment jauntily and good-humouredly. That great philosophy of not attaching too much importance to any one thing in life, sustained him in every venture. 'Bet on the field—never back the favourite,' was his formula for inculcating the wisdom of trusting to the general game of life, rather than to any particular emergency. 'Back the field,' he would say, 'and you must be unlucky, or you 'll come right in the long-run.'

They dined that day alone, that is, they were but three at table; and Atlee enjoyed the unspeakable pleasure of hearing them talk with the freedom and unconstraint people only indulge in when 'at home.' Lord Danesbury discussed confidential questions of political importance: told how his colleagues agreed in this, or differed on that; adverted to the nice points of temperament which made one man hopeful and that other despondent or distrustful; he exposed the difficulties they had to meet in the Commons, and where the Upper House was intractable; and even went so far in his confidences as to admit where the criticisms of the Press were felt to be damaging to the administration.

'The real danger of ridicule,' said he, 'is not the pungency of the satire, it is the facility with which it is remembered and circulated. The man who reads the strong leader in the *Times* may have some general impression of being convinced, but he cannot repeat its arguments or quote its expressions. The pasquinade or the squib gets a hold on the mind, and in its very drollery will ensure its being retained there.'

Atlee was not a little gratified to hear that this opinion was delivered apropos to a short paper of his own, whose witty sarcasms on the Cabinet were exciting great amusement in town, and much curiosity as to the writer.

'He has not seen "The Whitebait Dinner" yet,' said Lady Maude; 'the cleverest *jeu d'esprit* of the day.'

'Ay, or of any day,' broke in Lord Danesbury. 'Even the *Anti-Jacobin* has nothing better. The notion is this. The Devil happens to be taking a holiday, and he is in town just at the time of the Ministerial dinner, and hearing that he is at Claridge's, the Cabinet, ashamed at the little attention bestowed on a crowned head, ask him down to Greenwich. He accepts, and to kill an hour—

> "He strolled down, of course,
> To the Parliament House,
> And heard how England stood.

As she has since the Flood,
Without ally or friend to assist her.
But, while every persuasion
Was full of invasion
From Russian or Prussian,
Yet the only discussion
Was, how should a Gentleman marry his sister."'

'Can you remember any more of it, my lord?' asked Atlee, on whose table at that moment were lying the proof-sheets of the production.

'Maude has it all somewhere. You must find it for him, and let him guess the writer—if he can.'

'What do the clubs say?' asked Atlee.

'I think they are divided between Orlop and Bouverie. I'm told that the Garrick people say it's Sankey, a young fellow in F. O.'

'You should see Aunt Jerningham about it, Mr. Atlee—her eagerness is driving her half mad.'

'Take him out to "Lebanon" on Sunday,' said my lord; and Lady Maude agreed with a charming grace and courtesy, adding as she left the room, 'So remember you are engaged for Sunday.'

Atlee bowed as he held the door open for her to pass out, and threw into his glance what he desired might mean homage and eternal devotion.

'Now then for a little quiet confab,' said my lord. 'Let me hear what you mean by your telegram. All I could make out was that you found our man.'

'Yes, I found him, and passed several hours in his company.'

'Was the fellow very much out at elbows, as usual?'

'No, my lord—thriving, and likely to thrive. He has just been named envoy to the Ottoman Court.'

'Bah!' was all the reply his incredulity could permit.

'True, I assure you. Such is the estimation he is held in at Athens, the Greeks declare he has not his equal. You are aware that his name is Spiridion Kostalergi, and he claims to be Prince of Delos.'

'With all my heart. Our Hellenic friends never quarrel over their nobility. There are titles and to spare for every one. Will he give us our papers?'

'Yes; but not without high terms. He declares, in fact, my lord, that you can no more return to the Bosporus without *him* than he can go there without *you*.'

'Is the fellow insolent enough to take this ground?'

'That is he. In fact, he presumes to talk as your lordship's

colleague, and hints at the several points in which you may act in concert.'

'It is very Greek all this.'

'His terms are ten thousand pounds in cash, and——'

'There, there, that will do. Why not fifty—why not a hundred thousand?'

'He affects a desire to be moderate, my lord.'

'I hope you withdrew at once after such a proposal? I trust you did not prolong the interview a moment longer?'

'I arose, indeed, and declared that the mere mention of such terms was like a refusal to treat at all.'

'And you retired?'

'I gained the door, when he detained me. He has, I must admit, a marvellous plausibility, for though at first he seemed to rely on the all-importance of these documents to your lordship—how far they would compromise you in the past and impede you for the future, how they would impair your influence, and excite the animosity of many who were freely canvassed and discussed in them—yet he abandoned all that at the end of our interview, and restricted himself to the plea that the sum, if a large one, could not be a serious difficulty to a great English noble, and would be the crowning fortune of a poor Greek gentleman, who merely desired to secure a marriage-portion for his only daughter.'

'And you believed this?'

'I so far believed him that I have his pledge in writing that, when he has your lordship's assurance that you will comply with his terms—and he only asks that much—he will deposit the papers in the hands of the Minister at Athens, and constitute your lordship the trustee of the amount in favour of his daughter, the sum only to be paid on her marriage.'

'How can it possibly concern me that he has a daughter, or why should I accept such a trust?'

'The proposition had no other meaning than to guarantee the good faith on which his demand is made.'

'I don't believe in the daughter.'

'That is, that there is one?'

'No. I am persuaded that she has no existence. It is some question of a mistress or a dependant; and if so, the sentimentality, which would seem to have appealed so forcibly to you, fails at once.'

'That is quite true, my lord; and I cannot pretend to deny the weakness you accuse me of. There may be no daughter in the question.'

'Ah! You begin to perceive now that you surrendered your

convictions too easily, Atlee. You failed in that element of "restless distrust" that Talleyrand used to call the temper of the diplomatist.'

'It is not the first time I have had to feel I am your lordship's inferior.'

'*My* education was not made in a day, Atlee. It need be no discouragement to you that you are not as long-sighted as I am. No, no; rely upon it, there is no daughter in the case.'

'With that conviction, my lord, what is easier than to make your adhesion to his terms conditional on his truth? You agree, if his statement be in all respects verified.'

'Which implies that it is of the least consequence to me whether the fellow has a daughter or not?'

'It is so only as the guarantee of the man's veracity.'

'And shall I give ten thousand pounds to test *that*?'

'No, my lord; but to repossess yourself of what, in very doubtful hands, might prove a great scandal and a great disaster.'

'Ten thousand pounds! ten thousand pounds!'

'Why not eight—perhaps five? I have not your lordship's great knowledge to guide me, and I cannot tell when these men really mean to maintain their ground. From my own very meagre experiences, I should say he was not a very tractable individual. He sees some promise of better fortune before him, and like a genuine gambler—as I hear he is—he determines to back his luck.'

'Ten thousand pounds!' muttered the other, below his breath.

'As regards the money, my lord, I take it that these same papers were documents which more or less concerned the public service—they were in no sense personal, although meant to be private; and, although in my ignorance I may be mistaken, it seems to me that the fund devoted to secret services could not be more fittingly appropriated than in acquiring documents whose publicity could prove a national injury.'

'Totally wrong—utterly wrong. The money could never be paid on such a pretence—the "Office" would not sanction—no Minister would dare to advise it.'

'Then I come back to my original suggestion. I should give a conditional acceptance, and treat for a reduction of the amount.'

'You would say five?'

'I opine, my lord, eight would have more chance of success.'

'You are a warm advocate for your client,' said his lordship, laughing; and though the shot was merely a random one, it went so true to the mark that Atlee flushed up and became crimson all over. 'Don't mistake me, Atlee,' said his lordship in a kindly

tone. 'I know thoroughly how *my* interests, and only mine, have any claim on your attention. This Greek fellow must be less than nothing to you. Tell me now frankly, do you believe one word he has told you? Is he really named as Minister to Turkey?'

'That much I can answer for—he is.'

'What of the daughter—is there a daughter?'

'I suspect there may be. However, the matter admits of an easy proof. He has given me names and addresses in Ireland of relatives with whom she is living. Now, I am thoroughly conversant with Ireland, and, by the indications in my power, I can pledge myself to learn all, not only about the existence of this person, but of such family circumstances as might serve to guide you in your resolve. Time is what is most to be thought of here. Kostalergi requires a prompt answer—first of all, your assurance that you will support his claim to be received by the Sultan. Well, my lord, if you refuse, Mouravieff will do it. You know better than me how impolitic it might be to throw those Turks more into Russian influence——'

'Never mind *that*, Atlee. Don't distress yourself about the political aspect of the question.'

'I promised a telegraphic line to say, would you or would you not sustain his nomination. It was to be Yes or No—not more.'

'Say Yes. I'll not split hairs about what Greek best represents his nation. Say Yes.'

'I am sure, my lord, you do wisely. He is evidently a man of ability, and, I suspect, not morally much worse than his countrymen in general.'

'Say Yes; and then'—he mused for some minutes before he continued—'and then run over to Ireland—learn something, if you can, of this girl, with whom she is staying, in what position, what guarantees, if any, could be had for the due employment and destination of a sum of money, in the event of our agreeing to pay it. Mind, it is simply as a gauge of the fellow's veracity that this story has any value for us. Daughter or no daughter, is not of any moment to me; but I want to test the problem—can he tell one word of truth about anything? You are shrewd enough to see the bearing of this narrative on all he has told you—where it sustains, where it accuses him.'

'Shall I set out at once, my lord?'

'No. Next week will do. We'll leave him to ruminate over your telegram. *That* will show him we have entertained his project; and he is too practised a hand not to know the value of an opened negotiation. Cradock and Mellish, and one or two

more, wish to talk with you about Turkey. Graydon, too, has some questions to ask you about Suez. They dine here on Monday. Tuesday we are to have the Hargraves and Lord Masham, and a couple of Under-Secretaries of State; and Lady Maude will tell us about Wednesday, for all these people, Atlee, are coming to meet *you*. The newspapers have so persistently been keeping you before the world, every one wants to see you.'

Atlee might have told his lordship—but he did not—by what agency it chanced that his journeys and his jests were so thoroughly known to the press of every capital in Europe.

CHAPTER LXXI

THE DRIVE

Sunday came, and with it the visit to South Kensington, where Aunt Jerningham lived; and Atlee found himself seated beside Lady Maude in a fine roomy barouche, whirling along at a pace that our great moralist himself admits to be amongst the very pleasantest excitements humanity can experience.

'I hope you will add your persuasions to mine, Mr. Atlee, and induce my uncle to take these horses with him to Turkey. You know Constantinople, and can say that real carriage-horses cannot be had there.'

'Horses of this size, shape, and action the Sultan himself has not the equals of.'

'No one is more aware than my lord,' continued she, 'that the measure of an ambassador's influence is, in a great degree, the style and splendour in which he represents his country, and that his household, his equipage, his retinue, and his dinners, should mark distinctly the station he assumes to occupy. Some caprice of Mr. Walpole's about Arab horses—Arabs of bone and blood he used to talk of—has taken hold of my uncle's mind, and I half fear that he may not take the English horses with him.'

'By the way,' said Atlee, half listlessly, 'where *is* Walpole? What has become of him?'

'He is in Ireland at this moment.'

'In Ireland! Good heavens! has he not had enough of Ireland?'

'Apparently not. He went over there on Tuesday last.'

'And what can he possibly have to do in Ireland?'

'I should say that *you* are more likely to furnish the answer to that question than I. If I'm not much mistaken, his letters

are forwarded to the same country-house where you first made each other's acquaintance.'

'What, Kilgobbin Castle?'

'Yes, it is something Castle, and I think the name you mentioned.'

'And this only puzzles me the more,' added Atlee, pondering. 'His first visit there, at the time I met him, was a mere accident of travel—a tourist's curiosity to see an old castle supposed to have some historic associations.'

'Were there not some other attractions in the spot?' interrupted she, smiling.

'Yes, there was a genial old Irish squire, who did the honours very handsomely, if a little rudely, and there were two daughters, or a daughter and a niece, I'm not very clear which, who sang Irish melodies and talked rebellion to match very amusingly.'

'Were they pretty?'

'Well, perhaps courtesy would say "pretty," but a keener criticism would dwell on certain awkwardnesses of manner—Walpole called them Irishries.'

'Indeed!'

'Yes, he confessed to have been amused with the eccentric habits and odd ways, but he was not sparing of his strictures afterwards.'

'So that there were no "tendernesses"?'

'Oh, I'll not go that far. I rather suspect there were "tendernesses," but only such as a fine gentleman permits himself amongst semi-savage peoples—something that seems to say, "Be as fond of me as you like, and it is a great privilege you enjoy; and I, on my side, will accord you such of my affections as I set no particular store by." Just as one throws small coin to a beggar.'

'Oh, Mr. Atlee!'

'I am ashamed to own that I have seen something of this kind myself.'

'It is not like my cousin Cecil to behave in that fashion.'

'I might say, Lady Maude, that your home experiences of people would prove a very fallacious guide as to what they might or might not do in a society of whose ways you know nothing.'

'A man of honour would always be a man of honour.'

'There are men, and men of honour, as there are persons of excellent principles with delicate moral health, and they—I say it with regret—must be satisfied to be as respectably conducted as they are able.'

'I don't think you like Cecil,' said she, half-puzzled by his subtlety, but hitting what she thought to be a 'blot.'

'It is difficult for me to tell his cousin what I should like to say in answer to this remark.'

'Oh, have no embarrassment on that score. There are very few people less trammelled by the ties of relationship than we are. Speak out, and if you want to say anything particularly severe, have no fears of wounding my susceptibilities.'

'And do you know, Lady Maude,' said he, in a voice of almost confidential meaning, 'this was the very thing I was dreading? I had at one time a good deal of Walpole's intimacy—I 'll not call it friendship, for somehow there were certain differences of temperament that separated us continually. We could commonly agree upon the same things; we could never be one-minded about the same people. In *my* experiences, the world is by no means the cold-hearted and selfish thing *he* deems it; and yet I suppose, Lady Maude, if there were to be a verdict given upon us both, nine out of ten would have fixed on *me* as the scoffer. Is not this so?'

The artfulness with which he had contrived to make himself and his character a question of discussion achieved only a half-success, for she only gave one of her most meaningless smiles as she said, 'I do not know; I am not quite sure.'

'And yet I am more concerned to learn what *you* would think on this score than for the opinion of the whole world.'

Like a man who has taken a leap and found a deep 'drop' on the other side, he came to a dead halt as he saw the cold and impassive look her features had assumed. He would have given worlds to recall his speech and stand as he did before it was uttered; for though she did not say one word, there was that in her calm and composed expression which reproved all that savoured of passionate appeal. A now-or-never sort of courage nerved him, and he went on: 'I know all the presumption of a man like myself daring to address such words to you, Lady Maude; but do you remember that though all eyes but one saw only fog-bank in the horizon, Columbus maintained there was land in the distance; and so say I, "He who would lay his fortunes at your feet now sees high honours and great rewards awaiting him in the future. It is with you to say whether these honours become the crowning glories of a life, or all pursuit of them be valueless!" May I—dare I hope?'

'This is Lebanon,' said she; 'at least I think so'; and she held her glass to her eye. 'Strange caprice, wasn't it, to call her house Lebanon because of those wretched cedars? Aunt Jerningham is so odd!'

'There is a crowd of carriages here,' said Atlee, endeavouring to speak with unconcern.

'It is her day; she likes to receive on Sundays, as she says she escapes the bishops. By the way, did you tell me you were an old friend of hers, or did I dream it?'

'I'm afraid it was the vision revealed it.'

'Because, if so, I must not take you in. She has a rule against all presentations on Sundays—they are only her intimates she receives on that day. We shall have to return as we came.'

'Not for worlds. Pray let me not prove an embarrassment. You can make your visit, and I will go back on foot. Indeed, I should like a walk.'

'On no account! Take the carriage, and send it back for me. I shall remain here till afternoon tea.'

'Thanks, but I hold to my walk.'

'It is a charming day, and I 'm sure a walk will be delightful.'

'Am I to suppose, Lady Maude,' said he, in a low voice, as he assisted her to alight, 'that you will deign me a more formal answer at another time to the words I ventured to address you? May I live in the hope that I shall yet regard this day as the most fortunate of my life?'

'It is wonderful weather for November—an English November, too. Pray let me assure you that you need not make yourself uneasy about what you were speaking of. I shall not mention it to any one, least of all to "my lord"; and as for myself, it shall be as completely forgotten as though it had never been uttered.'

And she held out her hand with a sort of cordial frankness that actually said, 'There, you are forgiven! Is there any record of generosity like this?'

Atlee bowed low and resignedly over that gloved hand, which he felt he was touching for the last time, and turned away with a rush of thoughts through his brain, in which certainly the pleasantest were not the predominating ones.

He did not dine that day at Bruton Street, and only returned about ten o'clock, when he knew he should find Lord Danesbury in his study.

'I have determined, my lord,' said he, with somewhat of decision in his tone that savoured of a challenge, 'to go over to Ireland by the morning mail.

Too much engrossed by his own thoughts to notice the other's manner, Lord Danesbury merely turned from the papers before him to say, 'Ah, indeed! it would be very well done. We were talking about that, were we not, yesterday? What was it?

'The Greek—Kostalergi's daughter, my lord?'

'To be sure. You are incredulous about her, ain't you?'

'On the contrary, my lord, I opine that the fellow has told us the truth. I believe he has a daughter, and destines this money to be her dowry.'

'With all my heart; I do not see how it should concern me. If I am to pay the money, it matters very little to me whether he invests it in a Greek husband or the Double Zero—speculations, I take it, pretty much alike. Have you sent a telegram?'

'I have, my lord. I have engaged your lordship's word that you are willing to treat.'

'Just so; it is exactly what I am! Willing to treat, willing to hear argument, and reply with my own, why I should give more for anything than it is worth.'

'We need not discuss further what we can only regard from one point of view, and that our own.'

Lord Danesbury started. The altered tone and manner struck him now for the first time, and he threw his spectacles on the table and stared at the speaker with astonishment.

'There is another point, my lord,' continued Atlee, with unbroken calm, 'that I should like to ask your lordship's judgment upon, as I shall in a few hours be in Ireland, where the question will present itself. There was some time ago in Ireland a case brought under your lordship's notice of a very gallant resistance made by a family against an armed party who attacked a house, and your lordship was graciously pleased to say that some recognition should be offered to one of the sons—something to show how the Government regarded and approved his spirited conduct.'

'I know, I know; but I am no longer the Viceroy.'

'I am aware of that, my lord, nor is your successor appointed; but any suggestion or wish of your lordship's would be accepted by the Lords Justices with great deference, all the more in payment of a debt. If, then, your lordship would recommend this young man for the first vacancy in the constabulary, or some place in the Customs, it would satisfy a most natural expectation, and, at the same time, evidence your lordship's interest for the country you so late ruled over.'

'There is nothing more pernicious than forestalling other people's patronage, Atlee. Not but if this thing was to be done for yourself——'

'Pardon me, my lord, I do not desire anything for myself.'

'Well, be it so. Take this to the Chancellor or the Commander-in-Chief'—and he scribbled a few hasty lines as he talked—'and say what you can in support of it. If they give you something good, I shall be heartily glad of it, and I wish you years to enjoy it.'

Atlee only smiled at the warmth of interest for him which was linked with such a shortness of memory; but was too much wounded in his pride to reply. And now, as he saw that his lordship had replaced his glasses and resumed his work, he walked noiselessly to the door and withdrew.

CHAPTER LXXII

THE SAUNTER IN TOWN

As Atlee sauntered along towards Downing Street, whence he purposed to despatch his telegram to Greece, he thought a good deal of his late interview with Lord Danesbury. There was much in it that pleased him. He had so far succeeded in *re* Kostalergi, that the case was not scouted out of court; the matter, at least, was to be entertained, and even that was something. The fascination of a scheme to be developed, an intrigue to be worked out, had for his peculiar nature a charm little short of ecstasy. The demand upon his resources for craft and skill, concealment and duplicity, was only second in his estimation to the delight he felt at measuring his intellect with some other, and seeing whether, in the game of subtlety, he had his master.

Next to this, but not without a long interval, was the pleasure he felt at the terms in which Lord Danesbury spoke of him. No orator accustomed to hold an assembly enthralled by his eloquence —no actor habituated to sway the passions of a crowded theatre —is more susceptible to the promptings of personal vanity than your 'practised talker.' The man who devotes himself to be a 'success' in conversation glories more in his triumphs, and sets a greater value on his gifts, than any other I know of.

That men of mark and station desired to meet him—that men whose position secured to them the advantage of associating with the pleasantest people and the freshest minds—men who commanded, so to say, the best talking in society—wished to confer with and to hear *him*, was an intense flattery, and he actually longed for the occasion of display. He had learned a good deal since he had left Ireland. He had less of that fluency which Irishmen cultivate, seldom ventured on an epigram, never on an anecdote, was guardedly circumspect as to statements of fact, and, on the whole, liked to understate his case, and affect distrust of his own opinion. Though there was not one of these which were not more or less restrictions on him, he could be brilliant and witty when occasion served, and there was an incisive neat-

ness in his repartee in which he had no equal. Some of those he was to meet were well known amongst the most agreeable people of society, and he rejoiced that at least, if he were to be put upon his trial, he should be judged by his peers.

With all these flattering prospects, was it not strange that his lordship never dropped a word, nor even a hint, as to his personal career? He had told him, indeed, that he could not hope for success at Cradford, and laughingly said, 'You have left Odger miles behind you in your Radicalism. Up to this, we have had no Parliament in England sufficiently advanced for your opinions.' On the whole, however, if not followed up—which Lord Danesbury strongly objected to its being—he said there was no great harm in a young man making his first advances in political life by something startling. They are only fireworks, it is true; the great requisite is, that they be brilliant, and do not go out with a smoke and a bad smell!

Beyond this, he had told him nothing. Was he minded to take him out to Turkey, and as what? He had already explained to him that the old days in which a clever fellow could be drafted at once into a secretaryship of embassy were gone by; that though a parliamentary title was held to supersede all others, whether in the case of a man or a landed estate, it was all-essential to be in the House for *that*, and that a diplomatist, like a sweep, must begin when he is little.

'As his private secretary,' thought he, 'the position is at once fatal to all my hopes with regard to Lady Maude.' There was not a woman living more certain to measure a man's pretensions by his station. 'Hitherto I have not been "classed." I might be anybody or go anywhere. My wide capabilities seemed to say that if I descended to do small things, it would be quite as easy for me to do great ones; and though I copied despatches, they would have been rather better if I had drafted them also.'

Lady Maude knew this. She knew the esteem in which her uncle held him. She knew how that uncle, shrewd man of the world as he was, valued the sort of qualities he saw in him, and could, better than most men, decide how far such gifts were marketable, and what price they brought to their possessor.

'And yet,' cried he, 'they don't know one half of me! What would they say if they knew that it was I wrote the great paper on Turkish Finance in the *Mémorial Diplomatique*, and the review of it in the *Quarterly*; that it was I who exposed the miserable compromise of Thiers with Gambetta in the *Débats*, and defended him in the *Daily News*; that the hysterical scream of the *Kreuz Zeitung*, and the severe article on Bismarck in the

Fortnightly, were both mine; and that at this moment I am urging in the *Pike* how the Fenian prisoners must be amnestied, and showing in a London review that if they are liberated, Mr. Gladstone should be attainted for high treason? I should like well to let them know all this; and I'm not sure I would not risk all the consequences to do it.'

And then he as suddenly bethought him how little account men of letters were held in by the Lady Maudes of this world; what a humble place they assigned them socially; and how small they estimated their chances of worldly success!

'It is the unrealism of literature as a career strikes them; and they cannot see how men are to assure themselves of the *quoi vivre* by providing what so few want, and even they could exist without.'

It was in a reverie of this fashion he walked the streets, as little cognisant of the crowd around him as if he were sauntering along some rippling stream in a mountain gorge.

CHAPTER LXXIII

A DARKENED ROOM

THE 'comatose' state, to use the language of the doctors, into which Gorman O'Shea had fallen, had continued so long as to excite the greatest apprehensions of his friends; for although not amounting to complete insensibility, it left him so apathetic and indifferent to everything and every one, that the girls Kate and Nina, in pure despair, had given up reading or talking to him, and passed their hours of 'watching' in perfect silence in the half-darkened room.

The stern immobility of his pale features, the glassy and meaningless stare of his large blue eyes, the unvarying rhythm of a long-drawn respiration, were signs that at length became more painful to contemplate than evidences of actual suffering; and as day by day went on, and interest grew more and more eager about the trial, which was fixed for the coming assize, it was pitiable to see him, whose fate was so deeply pledged on the issue, unconscious of all that went on around him, and not caring to know any of those details the very least of which might determine his future lot.

The instructions drawn up for the defence were sadly in need of the sort of information which the sick man alone could supply; and Nina and Kate had both been entreated to watch for the

first favourable moment that should present itself, and ask certain questions, the answers to which would be of the last importance.

Though Gill's affidavit gave many evidences of unscrupulous falsehood, there was no counter-evidence to set against it, and O'Shea's counsel complained strongly of the meagre instructions which were briefed to him in the case, and his utter inability to construct a defence upon them.

'He said he would tell me something this evening, Kate,' said Nina; 'so, if you will let me, I will go in your place and remind him of his promise.'

This hopeful sign of returning intelligence was so gratifying to Kate that she readily consented to the proposition of her cousin taking her 'watch,' and, if possible, learning something of his wishes.

'He said it,' continued Nina, 'like one talking to himself, and it was not easy to follow him. The words, as well as I could make out, were, "I will say it to-day—this evening, if I can. When it is said"—here he muttered something, but I cannot say whether the words were, "My mind will be at rest," or "I shall be at rest for evermore."'

Kate did not utter a word, but her eyes swam, and two large tears stole slowly down her face.

'His own conviction is that he is dying,' said Nina; but Kate never spoke.

'The doctors persist,' continued Nina, 'in declaring that this depression is only a well-known symptom of the attack, and that all affections of the brain are marked by a certain tone of despondency. They even say more, and that the cases where this symptom predominates are more frequently followed by recovery. Are you listening to me, child?'

'No; I was following some thoughts of my own.'

'I was merely telling you why I think he is getting better.'

Kate leaned her head on her cousin's shoulder, and she did not speak. The heaving motion of her shoulders and her chest betrayed the agitation she could not subdue.

'I wish his aunt were here; I see how her absence frets him. Is she too ill for the journey?' asked Nina.

'She says not, and she seems in some way to be coerced by others; but a telegram this morning announces she would try and reach Kilgobbin this evening.'

'What could coercion mean? Surely this is mere fancy?'

'I am not so certain of that. The convent has great hopes of inheriting her fortune. She is rich, and she is a devout Catholic;

and we have heard of cases where zeal for the Church has pushed discretion very far.'

'What a worldly creature it is!' cried Nina; 'and who would have suspected it?'

'I do not see the worldliness of my believing that people will do much to serve the cause they follow. When chemists tell us that there is no finding such a thing as a glass of pure water, where are we to go for pure motives?'

'To one's heart, of course,' said Nina; but the curl of her perfectly-cut lip as she said it scarcely vouched for the sincerity.

On that same evening, just as the last flickerings of twilight were dying away, Nina stole into the sick-room, and took her place noiselessly beside the bed.

Slowly moving his arm without turning his head, or by any gesture whatever acknowledging her presence, he took her hand and pressed it to his burning lips, and then laid it upon his cheek. She made no effort to withdraw her hand, and sat perfectly still and motionless.

'Are we alone?' whispered he, in a voice hardly audible.

'Yes, quite alone.'

'If I should say what—displease you,' faltered he, his agitation making speech even more difficult; 'how shall I tell?' And once more he pressed her hand to his lips.

'No, no; have no fears of displeasing me. Say what you would like to tell me.'

'It is this, then,' said he, with an effort. 'I am dying with my secret in my heart. I am dying, to carry away with me the love I am not to tell—my love for you, Kate.'

'I am *not* Kate,' was almost on her lips; but her struggle to keep silent was aided by that desire so strong in her nature—to follow out a situation of difficulty to the end. She did not love him, nor did she desire his love; but a strange sense of injury at hearing his profession of love for another shot a pang of intense suffering through her heart, and she lay back in her chair with a cold feeling of sickness like fainting. The overpowering passion of her nature was jealousy; and to share even the admiration of a salon, the 'passing homage,' as such deference is called, with another, was a something no effort of her generosity could compass.

Though she did not speak, she suffered her hand to remain unresistingly within his own. After a short pause he went on: 'I thought yesterday that I was dying; and in my rambling intellect I thought I took leave of you; and do you know my last words—my last words, Kate?'

'No; what were they?'

'My last words were these: "Beware of the Greek; have no friendship with the Greek."'

'And why that warning?' said she, in a low, faint voice.

'She is not of us, Kate; none of her ways or thoughts are ours, nor would they suit us. She is subtle, and clever, and sly; and these only mislead those who lead simple lives.'

'May it not be that you wrong her?'

'I have tried to learn her nature.'

'Not to love it?'

'I believe I was beginning to love her—just when you were cold to me. You remember when?'

'I do; and it was this coldness was the cause? Was it the only cause?'

'No, no. She has wiles and ways which, with her beauty, make her nigh irresistible.'

'And now you are cured of this passion? There is no trace of it in your breast?'

'Not a vestige. But why speak of her?'

'Perhaps I am jealous.'

Once more he pressed his lips to her hand, and kissed it rapturously.

'No, Kate,' cried he, 'none but you have the place in my heart. Whenever I have tried a treason, it has turned against me. Is there light enough in the room to find a small portfolio of red-brown leather? It is on that table yonder.'

Had the darkness been not almost complete, Nina would scarcely have ventured to rise and cross the room, so fearful was she of being recognised.

'It is locked,' said she, as she laid it beside him on the bed; but touching a secret spring, he opened it, and passed his fingers hurriedly through the papers within.

'I believe it must be this,' said he. 'I think I know the feel of the paper. It is a telegram from my aunt; the doctor gave it to me last night. We read it over together four or five times. This is it, and these are the words: "If Kate will be your wife, the estate of O'Shea's Barn is your own for ever."'

'Is she to have no time to think over this offer?' asked she.

'Would you like candles, miss?' asked a maid-servant, of whose presence there neither of the others had been aware.

'No, nor are you wanted,' said Nina haughtily, as she arose; while it was not without some difficulty she withdrew her hand from the sick man's grasp.

'I know,' said he falteringly, 'you would not leave me if you

had not left hope to keep me company in your absence. Is not that so, Kate?'

'Bye-bye,' said she softly, and stole away.

CHAPTER LXXIV

AN ANGRY COLLOQUY

It was with passionate eagerness Nina set off in search of Kate. Why she should have felt herself wronged, outraged, insulted even, is not so easy to say, nor shall I attempt any analysis of the complex web of sentiments which, so to say, spread itself over her faculties. The man who had so wounded her self-love had been at her feet, he had followed her in her walks, hung over the piano as she sang—shown by a thousand signs that sort of devotion by which men intimate that their lives have but one solace, one ecstasy, one joy. By what treachery had he been moved to all this, if he really loved another? That he was simply amusing himself with the sort of flirtation she herself could take up as a mere pastime was not to be believed. That the worshipper should be insincere in his worship was too dreadful to think of. And yet it was to this very man she had once turned to avenge herself on Walpole's treatment of her; she had even said, 'Could you not make a quarrel with him?' Now, no woman of foreign breeding puts such a question without the perfect consciousness that, in accepting a man's championship, she has virtually admitted his devotion. Her own levity of character, the thoughtless indifference with which she would sport with any man's affections, so far from inducing her to palliate such caprices, made her more severe and unforgiving. 'How shall I punish him for this? How shall I make him remember whom it is he has insulted?' repeated she over and over to herself as she went.

The servants passed her on the stairs with trunks and luggage of various kinds; but she was too much engrossed with her own thoughts to notice them. Suddenly the words, 'Mr. Walpole's room,' caught her ear, and she asked, 'Has any one come?'

Yes, two gentlemen had just arrived. A third was to come that night, and Miss O'Shea might be expected at any moment.

'Where was Miss Kate?' she inquired.

'In her own room at the top of the house.'

Thither she hastened at once.

'Be a dear good girl,' cried Kate as Nina entered, 'and help

me in my many embarrassments. Here are a flood of visitors all coming unexpectedly. Major Lockwood and Mr. Walpole have come. Miss Betty will be here for dinner, and Mr. Atlee, whom we all believed to be in Asia, may arrive to-night. I shall be able to feed them; but how to lodge them with any pretension to comfort is more than I can see.'

'I am in little humour to aid any one. I have my own troubles—worse ones, perhaps, than playing hostess to disconsolate travellers.'

'And what are your troubles, dear Nina?'

'I have half a mind not to tell you. You ask me with that supercilious air that seems to say, "How can a creature like you be of interest enough to any one or anything to have a difficulty?'

'I force no confidences,' said the other coldly.

'For that reason you shall have them—at least this one. What will you say when I tell you that young O'Shea has made me a declaration, a formal declaration of love?'

'I should say that you need not speak of it as an insult or an offence.'

'Indeed! and if so, you would say what was perfectly wrong. It was both insult and offence—yes, both. Do you know that the man mistook me for *you*, and called me *Kate*?'

'How could this be possible?'

'In a darkened room, with a sick man slowly rallying from a long attack of stupor; nothing of me to be seen but my hand, which he devoured with kisses—raptures, indeed, Kate, of which I had no conception till I experienced them by counterfeit!'

'Oh! Nina, this is not fair!'

'It is true, child. The man caught my hand and declared he would never quit it till I promised it should be his own. Nor was he content with this; but, anticipating his right to be lord and master, he bade you to beware of *me*!' "Beware of that Greek girl!" were his words—words strengthened by what he said of my character and my temperament. I shall spare you, and I shall spare myself, his acute comments on the nature he dreaded to see in companionship with his wife. I have had good training in learning these unbiassed judgments—my early life abounded in such experiences—but this young gentleman's cautions were candour itself.'

'I am sincerely sorry for what has pained you.'

'I did not say it was this boy's foolish words had wounded me so acutely. I could bear sterner critics than he is—his very blundering misconception of me would always plead his pardon. How could he, or how could they with whom he lived and talked,

and smoked and swaggered, know of me, or such as me? What could there be in the monotonous vulgarity of their tiresome lives that should teach them what we are, or what we wish to be? By what presumption did he dare to condemn all that he could not understand?'

'You are angry, Nina; and I will not say without some cause.'

'What ineffable generosity! You can really constrain yourself to believe that I have been insulted!'

'I should not say insulted.'

'You cannot be an honest judge in such a cause. Every outrage offered to *me* was an act of homage to *yourself*! If you but knew how I burned to tell him who it was whose hand he held in his, and to whose ears he had poured out his raptures! To tell him, too, how the Greek girl would have resented his presumption, had he but dared to indulge it! One of the women-servants, it would seem, was a witness to this boy's declaration. I think it was Mary was in the room, I do not know for how long, but she announced her presence by asking some question about candles. In fact, I shall have become a servants'-hall scandal by this time.'

'There need not be any fear of that, Nina: there are no bad tongues amongst our people.'

'I know all that. I know we live amidst human perfectabilities—all of Irish manufacture, and warranted to be genuine.'

'I would hope that some of your impressions of Ireland are not unfavourable?'

'I scarcely know. I suppose you understand each other, and are tolerant about capricious moods and ways, which, to strangers, might seem to have a deeper significance. I believe you are not as hasty, or as violent, or as rash as you seem, and I am sure you are not as impulsive in your generosity, or as headlong in your affections. Not exactly that you mean to be false, but you are hypocrites to yourselves.'

'A very flattering picture of us.'

'I do not mean to flatter you; and it is to this end I say, you are Italians without the subtlety of the Italian, and Greeks without their genius.—You need not curtsy so profoundly.—I could say worse than this, Kate, if I were minded to do so.'

'Pray do not be so minded, then. Pray remember that, even when you wound me, I cannot return the thrust.'

'I know what you mean,' cried Nina rapidly. 'You are veritable Arabs in your estimate of hospitality, and he who has eaten your salt is sacred.'

'You remind me of what I had nigh forgotten, Nina—of our coming guests.'

'Do you know why Walpole and his friend are coming?'

'They are already come, Nina—they are out walking with papa; but what has brought them here I cannot guess, and, since I have heard your description of Ireland, I cannot imagine.'

'Nor can I,' said she indolently, and moved away.

CHAPTER LXXV

MATHEW KEARNEY'S REFLECTIONS

To have his house full of company, to see his table crowded with guests, was nearer perfect happiness than anything Kearney knew; and when he set out, the morning after the arrival of the strangers, to show Major Lockwood where he would find a brace of woodcocks, the old man was in such spirits as he had not known for years.

'Why don't your friend Walpole come with us?' asked he of his companion, as they trudged across the bog.

'I believe I can guess,' mumbled out the other; 'but I'm not quite sure I ought to tell.'

'I see,' said Kearney, with a knowing leer; 'he's afraid I'll roast him about that unlucky despatch he wrote. He thinks I'll give him no peace about that bit of stupidity; for you see, major, it *was* stupid, and nothing less. Of all the things we despise in Ireland, take my word for it, there is nothing we think so little of as a weak Government. We can stand up strong and bold against hard usage, and we gain self-respect by resistance; but when you come down to conciliations and what you call healing measures, we feel as if you were going to humbug us, and there is not a devilment comes into our heads we would not do, just to see how you'll bear it; and it's then your London newspapers cry out: "What's the use of doing anything for Ireland? We pulled down the Church, and we robbed the landlords, and we're now going to back Cardinal Cullen for them, and there they are murthering away as bad as ever."'

'Is it not true?' asked the major.

'And whose fault if it *is* true? Who has broke down the laws in Ireland but yourselves? We Irish never said that many things *you* called crimes were bad in morals, and when it occurs to you now to doubt if they are crimes, I'd like to ask you, why wouldn't *we* do them? You won't give us our independence, and so we'll

fight for it; and though, maybe, we can't lick you, we'll make your life so uncomfortable to you, keeping us down, that you'll beg a compromise—a healing measure, you'll call it—just as when I won't give Tim Sullivan a lease, he takes a shot at me; and as I reckon the holes in my hat, I think better of it, and take a pound or two off his rent.'

'So that, in fact, you court the policy of conciliation?'

'Only because I'm weak, major—because I'm weak, and that I must live in the neighbourhood. If I could pass my days out of the range of Tim's carbine, I wouldn't reduce him a shilling.'

'I can make nothing of Ireland or Irishmen either.'

'Why would you? God help us! we are poor enough and wretched enough; but we're not come down to that yet that a major of dragoons can read us like big print.'

'So far as I see you wish for a strong despotism.'

'In one way it would suit us well. Do you see, major, what a weak administration and uncertain laws do? They set every man in Ireland about righting himself by his own hand. If I know I shall be starved when I am turned out of my holding, I'm not at all so sure I'll be hanged if I shoot my landlord. Make me as certain of the one as the other, and I'll not shoot him.'

'I believe I understand you.'

'No, you don't, nor any Cockney among you.'

'I'm not a Cockney.'

'I don't care, you're the same: you're not one of us; nor if you spent fifty years among us, would you understand us.'

'Come over and see me in Berkshire, Kearney, and let me see if you can read our people much better.'

'From all I hear, there's not much to read. Your chaw-bacon isn't as cute a fellow as Pat.'

'He's easier to live with.'

'Maybe so; but I wouldn't care for a life with such people about me. I like human nature, and human feelings—ay, human passions, if you must call them so. I want to know—I can make some people love me, though I well know there must be others will hate me. You're all for tranquillity all over in England—a quiet life you call it. I like to live without knowing what's coming, and to feel all the time that I know enough of the game to be able to play it as well as my neighbours. Do you follow me now, major?'

'I'm not quite certain I do.'

'No—but I'm quite certain you don't; and, indeed, I wonder at myself talking to you about these things at all.'

'I'm much gratified that you do so. In fact, Kearney, you give me courage to speak a little about myself and my own affairs; and, if you will allow me, to ask your advice.'

This was an unusually long speech for the major, and he actually seemed fatigued when he concluded. He was, however, consoled for his exertions by seeing what pleasure his words had conferred on Kearney; and with what racy self-satisfaction that gentleman heard himself mentioned as a 'wise opinion.'

'I believe I do know a little of life, major,' said he sententiously. 'As old Giles Dackson used to say, "Get Mathew Kearney to tell you what he thinks of it." You knew Giles?'

'No.'

'Well, you've heard of him? No! not even that. There's another proof of what I was saying—we're two people, the English and the Irish. If it wasn't so, you'd be no stranger to the sayings and doings of one of the cutest men that ever lived.'

'We have witty fellows too.'

'No, you haven't! Do you call your House of Commons' jokes wit? Are the stories you tell at your hustings' speeches wit? Is there one over there'—and he pointed in the direction of England—'that ever made a smart repartee or a brilliant answer to any one about anything? You now and then tell an Irish story, and you forget the point; or you quote a French *mot*, and leave out the epigram. Don't be angry—it's truth I'm telling you.'

'I'm not angry, though I must say I don't think you are fair to us.'

'The last bit of brilliancy you had in the House was Brinsley Sheridan, and there wasn't much English about *him*.'

'I've never heard that the famous O'Connell used to convulse the House with his drollery.'

'Why should he? Didn't he know where he was? Do you imagine that O'Connell was going to do like poor Lord Killeen, who shipped a cargo of coalscuttles to Africa?'

'Will you explain to me then how, if you are so much shrewder and wittier and cleverer than us, it does not make you richer, more prosperous, and more contented?'

'I could do that too—but I'm losing the birds. There's a cock now. Well done! I see you can shoot a bit.—Look here, major, there's a deal in race—in the blood of a people. It's very hard to make a light-hearted, joyous people thrifty. It's your sullen fellow, that never cuts a joke, nor wants any one to laugh at it, that's the man who saves. If you're a wit, you want an audience, and the best audience is round a dinner-table; and we

know what that costs. Now, Ireland has been very pleasant for the last hundred and fifty years in that fashion, and you, and scores of other low-spirited, depressed fellows, come over here to pluck up and rouse yourselves, and you go home, and you wonder why the people who amused you were not always as jolly as you saw them. I've known this country now nigh sixty years, and I never knew a turn of prosperity that didn't made us stupid; and, upon my conscience, I believe, if we ever begin to grow rich, we'll not be a bit better than yourselves.'

'That would be very dreadful,' said the other, in mock-horror.

'So it would, whether you mean it or not.—There's a hare missed this time!'

'I was thinking of something I wanted to ask you. The fact is, Kearney, I have a thing on my mind now.'

'Is it a duel? It's many a day since I was out, but I used to know every step of the way as well as most men.'

'No, it's not a duel!'

'It's money, then! Bother it for money! What a deal of bad blood it leads to. Tell me all about it, and I'll see if I can't deal with it.'

'No, it's not money; it has nothing to do with money. I'm not hard up. I was never less so.'

'Indeed!' cried Kearney, staring at him.

'Why, what do you mean by that?'

'I was curious to see how a man looks, and I'd like to know how he feels, that didn't want money. I can no more understand it than if a man told me he didn't want air.'

'If he had enough to breathe freely, could he need more?'

'That would depend on the size of his lungs, and I believe mine are pretty big. But come now, if there's nobody you want to shoot, and you have a good balance at the banker's, what can ail you, except it's a girl you want to marry, and she won't have you?'

'Well, there is a lady in the case.'

'Ay, ay! she's a married woman,' cried Kearney, closing one eye, and looking intensely cunning. 'Then I may tell you at once, major, I'm no use to you whatever. If it was a young girl that liked you against the wish of her family, or that you were in love with though she was below you in condition, or that was promised to another man but wanted to get out of her bargain, I'm good for any of these, or scores more of the same kind; but if it's mischief, and misery, and lifelong sorrow, you have in your head, you must look out for another adviser.'

'It's nothing of the kind,' said the other bluntly. 'It's

marriage I was thinking of. I want to settle down and have a wife.'

'Then why couldn't you, if you think it would be any comfort to you.'

The last words were rather uttered than spoken, and sounded like a sad reflection uttered aloud.

'I am not a rich man,' said the major, with that strain it always cost him to speak of himself, 'but I have got enough to live on. A goodish old house, and a small estate, underlet as it is, bringing me about two thousand a year, and some expectations, as they call them, from an old grand-aunt.'

'You have enough, if you marry a prudent girl,' muttered Kearney, who was never happier than when advocating moderation and discretion.

'Enough, at least, not to look for money with a wife.'

'I'm with you there, heart and soul,' cried Kearney. 'Of all the shabby inventions of our civilisation, I don't know one as mean as that custom of giving a marriage-portion with a girl. Is it to induce a man to take her? Is it to pay for her board and lodging? Is it because marriage is a partnership, and she must bring her share into the "concern"? or is it to provide for the day when they are to part company, and each go his own road? Take it how you like, it's bad and it's shabby. If you're rich enough to give your daughter twenty or thirty thousand pounds, wait for some little family festival—her birthday, or her husband's birthday, or a Christmas gathering, or maybe a christening—and put the notes in her hand. Oh, major dear,' cried he aloud, 'if you knew how much of life you lose with lawyers, and what a deal of bad blood comes into the world by parchments, you'd see the wisdom of trusting more to human kindness and good feeling, and above all, to the honour of gentlemen—things that nowadays we alway hope to secure by Act of Parliament.'

'I go with a great deal of what you say.'

'Why not with all of it? What do we gain by trying to overreach each other? What advantage in a system where it's always the rogue that wins? If I was a king to-morrow, I'd rather fine a fellow for quoting Blackstone than for blasphemy, and I'd distribute all the law libraries in the kingdom as cheap fuel for the poor. We pray for peace and quietness, and we educate a special class of people to keep us always wrangling. Where's the sense of that?'

While Kearney poured out these words in a flow of fervid conviction, they had arrived at a little open space in the wood, from

which various alleys led off in different directions. Along one of these, two figures were moving slowly side by side, whom Lockwood quickly recognised as Walpole and Nina Kostalergi. Kearney did not see them, for his attention was suddenly called off by a shout from a distance, and his son Dick rode hastily up to the spot.

'I have been in search of you all through the plantation,' cried he. 'I have brought back Holmes the lawyer from Tullamore, who wants to talk to you about this affair of Gorman's. It's going to be a bad business, I fear.'

'Isn't that more of what I was saying?' said the old man, turning to the major. 'There's law for you!'

'They're making what they call a "National" event of it,' continued Dick. 'The *Pike* has opened a column of subscriptions to defray the cost of proceedings, and they've engaged Battersby with a hundred-guinea retainer already.'

It appeared from what tidings Dick brought back from the town, that the Nationalists—to give them the much unmerited name by which they called themselves—were determined to show how they could dictate to a jury.

'There's law for you!' cried the old man again.

'You'll have to take to vigilance committees, like the Yankees,' said the major.

'We've had them for years; but they only shoot their political opponents.'

'They say, too,' broke in the young man, 'that Donogan is in the town, and that it is he who has organised the whole prosecution. In fact, he intends to make Battersby's speech for the plaintiff a great declaration of the wrongs of Ireland; and as Battersby hates the Chief Baron, who will try the cause, he is determined to insult the Bench, even at the cost of a commitment.'

'What will he gain by that?' asked Lockwood.

'Every one cannot have a father that was hanged in '98; but any one can go to gaol for blackguarding a Chief-Justice,' said Kearney.

For a moment or two the old man seemed ashamed at having been led to make these confessions to 'the Saxon,' and telling Lockwood where he would be likely to find a brace of cocks, he took his son's arm and returned homeward.

CHAPTER LXXVI

VERY CONFIDENTIAL CONVERSATION

When Lockwood returned, only in time to dress for dinner, Walpole, whose room adjoined his, threw open the door between them and entered. He had just accomplished a most careful 'tie,' and came in with the air of one fairly self-satisfied and happy.

'You look quite triumphant this evening,' said the major, half sulkily.

'So I am, old fellow; and so I have a right to be. It's all done and settled.'

'Already?'

'Ay, already. I asked her to take a stroll with me in the garden; but we sauntered off into the plantation. A woman always understands the exact amount of meaning a man has in a request of this kind, and her instinct reveals to her at once whether he is eager to tell her some bit of fatal scandal of one of her own friends, or to make her a declaration.'

A sort of sulky grunt was Lockwood's acknowledgment of this piece of abstract wisdom—a sort of knowledge he never listened to with much patience.

'I am aware,' said Walpole flippantly, 'the female nature was an omitted part in your education, Lockwood, and you take small interest in those nice distinctive traits which, to a man of the world, are exactly what the stars are to the mariner.'

'Finding out what a woman means by the stars does seem very poor fun.'

'Perhaps you prefer the moon for your observation,' replied Walpole; and the easy impertinence of his manner was almost too much for the other's patience.

'I don't care for your speculations—I want to hear what passed between you and the Greek girl.'

'The Greek girl will in a very few days be Mrs. Walpole, and I shall crave a little more deference for the mention of her.'

'I forgot her name, or I should not have called her with such freedom! What is it?'

'Kostalergi. Her father is Kostalergi, Prince of Delos.'

'All right; it will read well in the *Post*.'

'My dear friend, there is that amount of sarcasm in your conversation this evening, that to a plain man like myself, never

ready to reply, and easily subdued by ridicule, is positively overwhelming. Has any disaster befallen you that you are become so satirical and severe?'

'Never mind *me* — tell me about yourself,' was the blunt reply.

'I have not the slightest objection. When we had walked a little way together, and I felt that we were beyond the risk of interruption, I led her to the subject of my sudden reappearance here, and implied that she, at least, could not have felt much surprise. "You remember," said I, "I promised to return?"

'"There is something so conventional," said she, "in these pledges, that one comes to read them like the 'yours sincerely' at the foot of a letter."

'"I ask for nothing better," said I, taking her up on her own words, "than to be 'yours sincerely.' It is to ratify that pledge by making you 'mine sincerely' that I am here."

'"Indeed!" said she slowly, and looking down.

'"I swear it!" said I, kissing her hand, which, however, had a glove on.'

'Why not her cheek?'

'That is not done, major mine, at such times.'

'Well, go on.'

'I can't recall the exact words, for I spoke rapidly; but I told her I was named Minister at a foreign Court, that my future career was assured, and that I was able to offer her a station, not, indeed, equal to her deserts, but that, occupied by her, would be only less than royal.'

'At Guatemala!' exclaimed the other derisively.

'Have the kindness to keep your geography to yourself,' said Walpole. 'I merely said in South America, and she had too much delicacy to ask more.'

'But she said Yes? She consented?'

'Yes, sir, she said she would venture to commit her future to my charge.'

'Didn't she ask you what means you had? what was your income?'

'Not exactly in the categorical way you put it, but she alluded to the possible style we should live in.'

'I'll swear she did. That girl asked you, in plain words, how many hundreds or thousands you had a year?'

'And I told her. I said, "It sounds humbly, dearest, to tell you we shall not have fully two thousand a year; but the place we are going to is the cheapest in the universe, and we shall have a small establishment of not more than forty black and about a

dozen white servants, and at first only keep twenty horses, taking our carriages on job."'

'What about pin-money?'

'There is not much extravagance in toilet, and so I said she must manage with a thousand a year.'

'And she didn't laugh in your face?'

'No, sir! nor was there any strain upon her good-breeding to induce her to laugh in my face.'

'At all events, you discussed the matter in a fine practical spirit. Did you go into groceries? I hope you did not forget groceries?'

'My dear Lockwood, let me warn you against being droll. You ask me for a correct narrative, and when I give it, you will not restrain that subtle sarcasm the mastery of which makes you unassailable.'

'When is it to be? When is it to come off? Has she to write to His Serene Highness the Prince of What's-his-name?'

'No, the Prince of What's-his-name need not be consulted; Lord Kilgobbin will stand in the position of father to her.'

Lockwood muttered something, in which, 'Give her away!' were the only words audible. 'I must say,' added he aloud, 'the wooing did not take long.'

'You forget that there was an actual engagement between us when I left this for London. My circumstances at that time did not permit me to ask her at once to be my wife; but our affections were pledged, and—even if more tender sentiments did not determine—my feeling, as a man of honour, required I should come back here to make her this offer.'

'All right; I suppose it will do—I hope it will do; and after all, I take it, you are likely to understand each other better than others would.'

'Such is our impression and belief.'

'How will your own people—how will Danesbury like it?'

'For their sakes I trust they will like it very much; for mine, it is less than a matter of indifference to me.'

'She, however—she will expect to be properly received amongst them?'

'Yes,' cried Walpole, speaking for the first time in a perfectly natural tone, divested of all pomposity. 'Yes, she stickles for that, Lockwood. It was the one point she seemed to stand out for. Of course I told her she would be received with open arms by my relatives—that my family would be overjoyed to receive her as one of them. I only hinted that my lord's gout might prevent him from being at the wedding. I'm not sure Uncle

Danesbury would not come over. "And the charming Lady Maude," asked she, "would she honour me so far as to be a bridesmaid?"'

'She didn't say that?'

'She did. She actually pushed me to promise I should ask her.'

'Which you never would.'

'Of that I will not affirm I am quite positive; but I certainly intend to press my uncle for some sort of recognition of the marriage—a civil note; better still, if it could be managed, an invitation to his house in town.'

'You are a bold fellow to think of it.'

'Not so bold as you imagine. Have you not often remarked that when a man of good connections is about to exile himself by accepting a far-away post, whether it be out of pure compassion or a feeling that it need never be done again, and that they are about to see the last of him; but, somehow—whatever the reason—his friends are marvellously civil and polite to him, just as some benevolent but eccentric folk send a partridge to the condemned felon for his last dinner.'

'They do that in France.'

'Here it would be a rumpsteak; but the sentiment is the same. At all events, the thing is as I told you, and I do not despair of Danesbury.'

'For the letter, perhaps not; but he'll never ask you to Bruton Street, nor, if he did, could you accept.'

'You are thinking of Lady Maude.'

'I am.'

'There would be no difficulty in that quarter. When a Whig becomes Tory, or a Tory Whig, the gentlemen of the party he has deserted never take umbrage in the same way as the vulgar dogs below the gangway; so it is in the world. The people who must meet, must dine together, sit side by side at flower-shows and garden-parties, always manage to do their hatreds decorously, and only pay off their dislikes by instalments. If Lady Maude were to receive my wife at all, it would be with a most winning politeness. All her malevolence would limit itself to making the supposed underbred woman commit a *gaucherie*, to do or say something that ought not to have been done or said; and, as I know Nina can stand the test, I have no fears for the experiment.'

A knock at the door apprised them that the dinner was waiting, neither having heard the bell which had summoned them a quarter of an hour before. 'And I wanted to hear all about your progress,' cried Walpole, as they descended the staircase together.

'I have none to report,' was the gruff reply.

'Why, surely you have not passed the whole day in Kearney's company without some hint of what you came here for?'

But at the same moment they were in the dining-room.

'We are a man party to-day, I am sorry to say,' cried old Kearney, as they entered. 'My niece and my daughter are keeping Miss O'Shea company upstairs. She is not well enough to come down to dinner, and they have scruples about leaving her in solitude.'

'At least we'll have a cigar after dinner,' was Dick's ungallant reflection as they moved away.

CHAPTER LXXVII

TWO YOUNG LADIES ON MATRIMONY

'I HOPE they had a pleasanter dinner downstairs than we have had here,' said Nina, as, after wishing Miss O'Shea a good-night, the young girls slowly mounted the stairs.

'Poor old godmother was too sad and too depressed to be cheerful company; but did she not talk well and sensibly on the condition of the country? was it not well said, when she showed the danger of all that legislation which, assuming to establish right, only engenders disunion and class jealousy?'

'I never followed her; I was thinking of something else.'

'She was worth listening to, then. She knows the people well, and she sees all the mischief of tampering with natures so imbued with distrust. The Irishman is a gambler, and English lawmakers are always exciting him to play.'

'It seems to me there is very little on the game.'

'There is everything—home, family, subsistence, life itself—all that a man can care for.'

'Never mind these tiresome themes; come into my room; or I'll go to yours, for I'm sure you've a better fire; besides, I can walk away if you offend me: I mean offend beyond endurance, for you are sure to say something cutting.'

'I hope you wrong me, Nina.'

'Perhaps I do. Indeed, I half suspect I do; but the fact is, it is not your words that reproach me, it is your whole life of usefulness is my reproach, and the least syllable you utter comes charged with all the responsibility of one who has a duty and does it, to a mere good-for-nothing. There, is not that humility enough?'

'More than enough, for it goes to flattery.'

'I'm not a bit sure all the time that I'm not the more lovable creature of the two. If you like, I'll put it to the vote at breakfast.'

'Oh, Nina!'

'Very shocking, that's the phrase for it, very shocking! Oh dear, what a nice fire, and what a nice little snug room; how is it, will you tell me, that though my room is much larger and better furnished in every way, your room is always brighter and neater, and more like a little home? They fetch you drier firewood, and they bring you flowers, wherever they get them. I know well what devices of roguery they practise.'

'Shall I give you tea?'

'Of course I'll have tea. I expect to be treated like a favoured guest in all things, and I mean to take this armchair, and the nice soft cushion for my feet, for I warn you, Kate, I'm here for two hours. I've an immense deal to tell you, and I'll not go till it's told.'

'I'll not turn you out.'

'I'll take care of that; I have not lived in Ireland for nothing. I have a proper sense of what is meant by possession, and I defy what your great Minister calls a heartless eviction. Even your tea is nicer, it is more fragrant than any one else's. I begin to hate you out of sheer jealousy.'

'That is about the last feeling I ought to inspire.'

'More humility; but I'll drop rudeness and tell you my story, for I have a story to tell. Are you listening? Are you attentive? Well, my Mr. Walpole, as you called him once, is about to become so in real earnest. I could have made a long narrative of it and held you in weary suspense, but I prefer to dash at once into the thick of the fray, and tell you that he has this morning made me a formal proposal, and I have accepted him. Be pleased to bear in mind that this is no case of a misconception or a mistake. No young gentleman has been petting and kissing my hand for another's; no tender speeches have been uttered to the ears they were not meant for. I have been wooed this time for myself, and on my own part I have said Yes.'

'You told me you had accepted him already. I mean when he was here last.'

'Yes, after a fashion. Don't you know, child, that though lawyers maintain that a promise to do a certain thing, to make a lease or some contract, has in itself a binding significance, that in Cupid's Court this is not law? and the man knew perfectly that all that passed between us hitherto had no serious meaning, and

bore no more real relation to marriage than an outpost encounter to a battle. For all that has taken place up to this, we might never fight—I mean marry—after all. The sages say that a girl should never believe a man means marriage till he talks money to her. Now, Kate, he talked money; and I believed him.'

'I wish you would tell me of these things seriously, and without banter.'

'So I do. Heaven knows I am in no jesting humour. It is in no outburst of high spirits or gaiety a girl confesses she is going to marry a man who has neither wealth nor station to offer, and whose fine connections are just fine enough to be ashamed of him.'

'Are you in love with him?'

'If you mean, do I imagine that this man's affection and this man's companionship are more to me than all the comforts and luxuries of life with another, I am not in love with him; but if you ask me, am I satisfied to risk my future with so much as I know of his temper, his tastes, his breeding, his habits, and his abilities, I incline to say Yes. Married life, Kate, is a sort of dietary, and one should remember that what he has to eat of every day ought not to be too appetising.'

'I abhor your theory.'

'Of course you do, child; and you fancy, naturally enough, that you would like ortolans every day for dinner; but my poor cold Greek temperament has none of the romantic warmth of your Celtic nature. I am very moderate in my hopes, very humble in all my ambitions.'

'It is not thus I read you.'

'Very probably. At all events, I have consented to be Mr. Walpole's wife, and we are to be Minister Plenipotentiary and Special Envoy somewhere. It is not Bolivia, nor the Argentine Republic, but some other fabulous region, where the only fact is yellow fever.'

'And you really like him?'

'I hope so, for evidently it must be on love we shall have to live, one half of our income being devoted to saddle-horses and the other to my toilet.'

'How absurd you are!'

'No, not I. It is Mr. Walpole himself, who, not trusting much to my skill at arithmetic, sketched out this schedule of expenditure; and then I bethought me how simple this man must deem me. It was a flattery that won me at once. Oh! Kate dearest, if you could understand the ecstasy of being thought, not a fool, but one easily duped, easily deceived!'

'I don't know what you mean.'

'It is this, then, that to have a man's whole heart—whether it be worth the having is another and a different question—you must impress him with his immense superiority in everything—that he is not merely physically stronger than you, and bolder and more courageous, but that he is mentally more vigorous and more able, judges better, decides quicker, resolves more fully than you; and that, struggle how you will, you pass your life in eternally looking up to this wonderful god, who vouchsafes now and then to caress you, and even say tender things to you.'

'Is it, Nina, that you have made a study of these things, or is all this mere imagination?'

'Most innocent young lady! I no more dreamed of these things to apply to such men as your country furnishes—good, homely, commonplace creatures—than I should have thought of asking you to adopt French cookery to feed them. I spoke of such men as one meets in what I may call the real world: as for the others, if they feel life to be a stage, they are always going about in slipshod fashion, as if at rehearsal. Men like your brother and young O'Shea, for instance—tossed here and there by accidents, made one thing by a chance, and something else by a misfortune. Take my word for it, the events of life are very vulgar things; the passions and emotions they evoke, *these* constitute the high stimulants of existence, they make the *gros jeu*, which it is so exciting to play.'

'I follow you with some difficulty; but I am rude enough to own I scarcely regret it.'

'I know, I know all about that sweet innocence that fancies to ignore anything is to obliterate it; but it's a fool's paradise, after all, Kate. We are in the world, and we must accept it as it is made for us.'

'I'll not ask, does your theory make you better, but does it make you happier?'

'If being duped were an element of bliss, I should say certainly not happier, but I doubt the blissful ignorance of your great moralist. I incline to believe that the better you play any game—life amongst the rest—the higher the pleasure it yields. I can afford to marry, without believing my husband to be a paragon—could *you* do as much?'

'I should like to know that I preferred him to any one else.'

'So should I, and I would only desire to add "to every one else that asked me." Tell the truth, Kate dearest, we are here all alone, and can afford sincerity. How many of us girls marry the man we should like to marry, and if the game were reversed,

and it were to be *we* who should make the choice—the slave pick out his master—how many, think you, would be wedded to their present mates?'

'So long as we can refuse him we do not like, I cannot think our case a hard one.'

'Neither should I if I could stand fast at three-and-twenty. The dread of that change of heart and feeling that will come, must come, ten years later, drives one to compromise with happiness, and take a part of what you once aspired to the whole.'

'You used to think very highly of Mr. Walpole; admired, and I suspect you liked him.'

'All true—my opinion is the same still. He will stand the great test that one can go into the world with him and not be ashamed of him. I know, dearest, even without that shake of the head, the small value you attach to this, but it is a great element in that droll contract, by which one person agrees to pit his temper against another's, and which we are told is made in heaven, with angels as sponsors. Mr. Walpole is sufficiently good-looking to be prepossessing, he is well bred, very courteous, converses extremely well, knows his exact place in life, and takes it quietly but firmly. All these are of value to his wife, and it is not easy to over-rate them.'

'Is that enough?'

'Enough for what? If you mean for romantic love, for the infatuation that defies all change of sentiment, all growth of feeling, that revels in the thought, experience will not make us wiser, nor daily associations less admiring, it is not enough. I, however, am content to bid for a much humbler lot. I want a husband who, if he cannot give me a brilliant station, will at least secure me a good position in life, a reasonable share of vulgar comforts, some luxuries, and the ordinary routine of what are called pleasures. If, in affording me these, he will vouchsafe to add good temper, and not high spirits—which are detestable—but fair spirits, I think I can promise him, not that I shall make him happy, but that he will make himself so, and it will afford me much gratification to see it.'

'Is this real, or——'

'Or what? Say what was on your lips.'

'Or are you utterly heartless?' cried Kate, with an effort that covered her face with blushes.

'I don't think I am,' said she oddly and calmly; 'but all I have seen of life teaches me that every betrayal of a feeling or a sentiment is like what gamblers call showing your hand, and is sure to be taken advantage of by the other players. It's an

ugly illustration, dear Kate, but in the same round game we call life there is so much cheating that if you cannot afford to be pillaged, you must be prudent.'

'I am glad to feel that I can believe you to be much better than you make yourself.'

'Do so, and as long as you can.'

There was a pause of several moments after this, each appa rently following out her own thoughts.

'By the way,' cried Nina suddenly, 'did I tell you that Mary wished me joy this morning. She had overheard Mr. Gorman's declaration, and believed he had asked me to be his wife.'

'How absurd!' said Kate, and there was anger as well as shame in her look as she said it.

'Of course it was absurd. She evidently never suspected to whom she was speaking, and then——' She stopped, for a quick glance at Kate's face warned her of the peril she was grazing. 'I told the girl she was a fool, and forbade her to speak of the matter to any one.'

'It is a servants'-hall story already,' said Kate quietly.

'Do you care for that?'

'Not much; three days will see the end of it.'

'I declare, in your own homely way, I believe you are the wiser of the two of us.'

'My common sense is of the very commonest,' said Kate, laughing; 'there is nothing subtle nor even neat about it.'

'Let us see that! Give me a counsel, or rather, say if you agree with me. I have asked Mr. Walpole to show me how his family accept my entrance amongst them; with what grace they receive me as a relative. One of his cousins called me the Greek girl, and in my own hearing. It is not, then, over-caution on my part to inquire how they mean to regard me. Tell me, however, Kate, how far you concur with me in this. I should like much to hear how your good sense regards the question. Should you have done as I have?'

'Answer me first one question. If you should learn that these great folks would not welcome you amongst them, would you still consent to marry Mr. Walpole?'

'I'm not sure, I am not quite certain, but I almost believe I should.'

'I have, then, no counsel to give you,' said Kate firmly. 'Two people who see the same object differently cannot discuss its pro-portions.'

'I see my blunder,' cried Nina impetuously. 'I put my question stupidly. I should have said, "If a girl has won a

man's affections and given him her own—if she feels her heart has no other home than in his keeping—that she lives for him and by him—should she be deterred from joining her fortunes to his because he has some fine connections who would like to see him marry more advantageously?"' It needed not the saucy curl of her lip as she spoke to declare how every word was uttered in sarcasm. 'Why will you not answer me?' cried she at length; and her eye shot glances of fiery impatience as she said it.

'Our distinguished friend Mr. Atlee is to arrive to-morrow, Dick tells me,' said Kate, with the calm tone of one who would not permit herself to be ruffled.

'Indeed! If your remark has any *apropos* at all, it must mean that in marrying such a man as he is, one might escape all the difficulties of family coldness, and I protest, as I think of it, the matter has its advantages.'

A faint smile was all Kate's answer.

'I cannot make you angry; I have done my best, and it has failed. I am utterly discomfited, and I 'll go to bed.'

'Good-night,' said Kate, as she held out her hand.

'I wonder is it nice to have this angelic temperament—to be always right in one's judgments, and never carried away by passion? I half suspect perfection does not mean perfect happiness.'

'You shall tell me when you are married,' said Kate, with a laugh; and Nina darted a flashing glance towards her, and swept out of the room.

CHAPTER LXXVIII

A MISERABLE MORNING

It was not without considerable heart-sinking and misgiving that old Kearney heard it was Miss Betty O'Shea's desire to have some conversation with him after breakfast. He was indeed, reassured, to a certain extent, by his daughter telling him that the old lady was excessively weak, and that her cough was almost incessant, and that she spoke with extreme difficulty. All the comfort that these assurances gave him was dashed by a settled conviction of Miss Betty's subtlety. 'She's like one of the wild foxes they have in Crim Tartary; and when you think they are dead, they're up and at you before you can look round.' He affirmed no more than the truth when he said that 'he'd rather walk barefoot to Kilbeggan than go up that stair to see her.'

There was a strange conflict in his mind all this time between

these ignoble fears and the efforts he was making to seem considerate and gentle by Kate's assurance that a cruel word, or even a harsh tone, would be sure to kill her. 'You'll have to be very careful, papa dearest,' she said. 'Her nerves are completely shattered, and every respiration seems as if it would be the last.'

Mistrust was, however, so strong in him, that he would have employed any subterfuge to avoid the interview; but the Rev. Luke Delany, who had arrived to give her 'the consolations,' as he briefly phrased it, insisted on Kearney's attending to receive the old lady's forgiveness before she died.

'Upon my conscience,' muttered Kearney, 'I was always under the belief it was I was injured; but, as the priest says, "it's only on one's death-bed he sees things clearly."'

As Kearney groped his way through the darkened room, shocked at his own creaking shoes, and painfully convinced that he was somehow deficient in delicacy, a low, faint cough guided him to the sofa where Miss O'Shea lay. 'Is that Mathew Kearney?' said she feebly. 'I think I know his foot.'

'Yes, indeed, bad luck to them for shoes. Wherever Davy Morris gets the leather I don't know, but it's as loud as a barrel-organ.'

'Maybe they're cheap, Mathew. One puts up with many a thing for a little cheapness.'

'That's the first shot!' muttered Kearney to himself, while he gave a little cough to avoid reply.

'Father Luke has been telling me, Mathew, that before I go this long journey I ought to take care to settle any little matter here that's on my mind. "If there's anybody you bear an ill will to," says he; "if there's any one has wronged you," says he, "told lies of you, or done you any bodily harm, send for him," says he, "and let him hear your forgiveness out of your own mouth. I'll take care afterwards," says Father Luke, "that he'll have to settle the account with *me*; but *you* mustn't mind that. You must be able to tell St. Joseph that you come with a clean breast and a good conscience": and that's'—here she sighed heavily several times—'and that's the reason I sent for you Mathew Kearney!'

Poor Kearney sighed heavily over that category of misdoers with whom he found himself classed, but he said nothing.

'I don't want to say anything harsh to you, Mathew, nor have I strength to listen, if you'd try to defend yourself; time is short with me now, but this I must say, if I'm here now sick and sore, and if the poor boy in the other room is lying down with his fractured head, it is you, and you alone, have the blame.'

'May the blessed Virgin gave me patience!' muttered he, as he wrung his hands despairingly.

'I hope she will; and give you more, Mathew Kearney. I hope she'll give you a hearty repentance. I hope she'll teach you that the few days that remain to you in this life are short enough for contrition—ay—contrition and castigation.'

'Ain't I getting it now,' muttered he; but low as he spoke the words her quick hearing had caught them.

'I hope you are; it is the last bit of friendship I can do you. You have a hard, worldly, selfish nature, Mathew; you had it as a boy, and it grew worse as you grew older. What many believed high spirits in you was nothing else than the reckless devilment of a man that only thought of himself. You could afford to be—at least to look—light-hearted, for you cared for nobody. You squandered your little property, and you'd have made away with the few acres that belonged to your ancestors, if the law would have let you. As for the way you brought up your children, that lazy boy below-stairs, that never did a hand's turn, is proof enough, and poor Kitty, just because she wasn't like the rest of you, how she's treated!'

'How is that; what is my cruelty there?' cried he.

'Don't try to make yourself out worse than you are,' said she sternly, 'and pretend that you don't know the wrong you done her.'

'May I never—if I understand what you mean.'

'Maybe you thought it was no business of yours to provide for your own child. Maybe you had a notion that it was enough that she had her food and a roof over her while you were here, and that somehow—anyhow—she'd get on, as they call it, when you were in the other place. Mathew Kearney, I'll say nothing so cruel to you as your own conscience is saying this minute; or maybe, with that light heart which makes your friends so fond of you, you never bothered yourself about her at all, and that's the way it come about.'

'What came about? I want to know *that*.'

'First and foremost, I don't think the law will let you. I don't believe you can charge your estate against the entail. I have a note there to ask M'Keown's opinion, and if I'm right, I'll set apart a sum in my will to contest it in the Queen's Bench. I tell you this to your face, Mathew Kearney, and I'm going where I can tell it to somebody better than a hard-hearted, cruel old man.'

'What is it that I want to do, and that the law won't let me?' asked he, in the most imploring accents.

'At least twelve honest men will decide it.'

'Decide what! in the name of the saints?' cried he.

'Don't be profane; don't parade your unbelieving notions to a poor old woman on her death-bed. You may want to leave your daughter a beggar, and your son little better, but you have no right to disturb my last moments with your terrible blasphemies.'

'I'm fairly bothered now,' cried he, as his two arms dropped powerlessly to his sides. 'So help me, if I know whether I'm awake or in a dream.'

'It's an excuse won't serve you where you'll be soon going, and I warn you, don't trust it.'

'Have a little pity on me, Miss Betty, darling,' said he, in his most coaxing tone; 'and tell me what it is I have done.'

'You mean what you are trying to do; but what, please the Virgin, we'll not let you!'

'What is *that*?'

'And what, weak and ill, and dying as I am, I've strength enough left in me to prevent, Mathew Kearney—and if you'll give me that Bible there, I'll kiss it, and take my oath that, if he marries her, he'll never put foot in a house of mine, nor inherit an acre that belongs to me; and all that I'll leave in my will shall be my—— Well, I won't say what, only it's something that he'll not have to pay a legacy duty on. Do you understand me now, or ain't I plain enough yet?'

'No, not yet. You'll have to make it clearer still.'

''Faith, I must say you did not pick up much cuteness from your adopted daughter.'

'Who is she?'

'The Greek hussy that you want to marry my nephew, and give a dowry to out of the estate that belongs to your son. I know it all, Mathew. I wasn't two hours in the house before my old woman brought me the story from Mary. Ay, stare if you like, but they all know it below-stairs, and a nice way you are discussed in your own house! Getting a promise out of a poor boy in a brain fever, making him give a pledge in his ravings! Won't it tell well in a court of justice, of a magistrate, a county gentleman, a Kearney of Kilgobbin? Oh! Mathew, Mathew, I'm ashamed of you!'

'Upon my oath, you're making me ashamed of myself that I sit here and listen to you,' cried he, carried beyond all endurance. 'Abusing, ay, blackguarding me this last hour about a lying story that came from the kitchen. It's you that ought to be ashamed, old lady. Not, indeed, for believing ill of an old friend—for

that's nature in you—but for not having common sense, just common sense to guide you, and a little common decency to warn you. Look now, there is not a word—there is not a syllable of truth in the whole story. Nobody ever thought of your nephew asking my niece to marry him; and if *he* did, she wouldn't have him. She looks higher, and she has a right to look higher, than to be the wife of an Irish squireen.'

'Go on, Mathew, go on. You waited for me to be as I am now before you had courage for words like these.'

'Well, I ask your pardon, and ask it in all humiliation and sorrow. My temper—bad luck to it!—gets the better, or, maybe, it's the worse, of me at times, and I say fifty things that I know I don't feel—just the way sailors load a gun with anything in the heat of an action.'

'I'm not in a condition to talk of sea-fights, Mr. Kearney, though I'm obliged to you all the same for trying to amuse me. You'll not think me rude if I ask you to send Kate to me? And please to tell Father Luke that I'll not see him this morning. My nerves have been sorely tried. One word before you go, Mathew Kearney; and have compassion enough not to answer me. You may be a just man and an honest man, you may be fair in your dealings, and all that your tenants say of you may be lies and calumnies, but to insult a poor old woman on her death-bed is cruel and unfeeling; and I'll tell you more, Mathew, it's cowardly and it's——'

Kearney did not wait to hear what more it might be, for he was already at the door, and rushed out as if he were escaping from a fire.

'I'm glad he's better than they made him out,' said Miss Betty to herself, in a tone of calm soliloquy; 'and he'll not be worse for some of the home truths I told him.' And with this she drew on her silk mittens, and arranged her cap composedly, while she waited for Kate's arrival.

As for poor Kearney, other troubles were awaiting him in his study, where he found his son and Mr. Holmes, the lawyer, sitting before a table covered with papers. 'I have no head for business now,' cried Kearney. 'I don't feel over well to-day, and if you want to talk to me, you'll have to put it off till to-morrow.'

'Mr. Holmes must leave for town, my lord,' interposed Dick, in his most insinuating tone, 'and he only wants a few minutes with you before he goes.'

'And it's just what he won't get. I would not see the Lord-Lieutenant if he was here now.

'The trial is fixed for Tuesday the 19th, my lord,' cried Holmes, 'and the National press has taken it up in such a way that we have no chance whatever. The verdict will be "Guilty," without leaving the box; and the whole voice of public opinion will demand the very heaviest sentence the law can pronounce.'

'Think of that poor fellow O'Shea, just rising from a sick-bed,' said Dick, as his voice shook with agitation.

'They can't hang him.'

'No, for the scoundrel Gill is alive, and will be the chief witness on the trial; but they may give him two years with prison labour, and if they do, it will kill him.'

'I don't know that. I've seen more than one fellow come out fresh and hearty after a spell. In fact, the plain diet, and the regular work, and the steady habits, are wonderful things for a young man that has been knocking about in a town life.'

'Oh, father, don't speak that way. I know Gorman well, and I can swear he'd not survive it.'

Kearney shook his head doubtingly, and muttered, 'There's a great deal said about wounded pride and injured feelings, but the truth is, these things are like a bad colic, mighty hard to bear, if you like, but nobody ever dies of it.'

'From all I hear about young Mr. O'Shea,' said Holmes, 'I am led to believe he will scarcely live through an imprisonment.'

'To be sure! Why not? At three or four-and-twenty we're all of us high-spirited and sensitive and noble-hearted, and we die on the spot if there's a word against our honour. It is only after we cross the line in life, wherever that be, that we become thick-skinned and hardened, and mind nothing that does not touch our account at the bank. Sure I know the theory well! Ay, and the only bit of truth in it all is, that we cry out louder when we're young, for we are not so well used to bad treatment.'

'Right or wrong, no man likes to have the whole press of a nation assailing him and all the sympathies of a people against him,' said Holmes.

'And what can you and your brothers in wigs do against that? Will all your little beguiling ways and insinuating tricks turn the *Pike* and the *Irish Cry* from what sells their papers? Here it is now, Mr. Holmes, and I can't put it shorter. Every man that lives in Ireland knows in his heart he must live in hot water; but somehow, though he may not like it, he gets used to it, and he finds it does him no harm in the end. There was an uncle

of my own was in a passion for forty years, and he died at eighty-six.'

'I wish I could only secure your attention, my lord, for ten minutes.'

'And what would you do, counsellor, if you had it?'

'You see, my lord, there are some very grave questions here. First of all, you and your brother magistrates had no right to accept bail. The injury was too grave: Gill's life, as the doctor's certificate will prove, was in danger. It was for a judge in Chambers to decide whether bail could be taken. They will move, therefore, in the Queen's Bench, for a mandamus——'

'May I never, if you won't drive me mad!' cried Kearney passionately; 'and I'd rather be picking oakum this minute than listening to all the possible misfortunes briefs and lawyers could bring on me.'

'Just listen to Holmes, father,' whispered Dick. 'He thinks that Gill might be got over—that if done by *you* with three or four hundred pounds, he'd either make his evidence so light, or he'd contradict himself, or, better than all, he'd not make an appearance at the trial——'

'Compounding a felony! Catch me at it!' cried the old man, with a yell.

'Well, Joe Atlee will be here to-night,' continued Dick. 'He's a clever fellow at all rogueries. Will you let him see if it can't be arranged.'

'I don't care who does it, so it isn't Mathew Kearney,' said he angrily, for his patience could endure no more. 'If you won't leave me alone now, I won't say but that I'll go out and throw myself into a bog-hole!'

There was a tone of such perfect sincerity in his speech, that, without another word, Dick took the lawyer's arm, and led him from the room.

A third voice was heard outside as they issued forth, and Kearney could just make out that it was Major Lockwood, who was asking Dick if he might have a few minutes' conversation with his father.

'I don't suspect you'll find my father much disposed for conversation just now. I think if you would not mind making your visit to him at another time——'

'Just so!' broke in the old man, 'if you're not coming with a strait-waistcoat, or a coil of rope to hold me down, I'd say it's better to leave me to myself.'

Whether it was that the major was undeterred by these forbidding evidences, or that what he deemed the importance of his

communication warranted some risk, certain it is he lingered at the door, and stood there where Dick and the lawyer had gone and left him.

A faint tap at the door at last apprised Kearney that some one was without, and he hastily, half angrily, cried, 'Come in!' Old Kearney almost started with surprise as the major walked in.

'I'm not going to make any apology for intruding on you,' cried he. 'What I want to say shall be said in three words, and I cannot endure the suspense of not having them said and answered. I've had a whole night of feverish anxiety, and a worse morning, thinking and turning over the thing in my mind, and settled it must be at once, one way or other, for my head will not stand it.'

'My own is tried pretty hard, and I can feel for you,' said Kearney, with a grim humour.

'I've come to ask if you'll give me your daughter?' said Lockwood, and his face became blood-red with the effort the words had cost him.

'Give you my daughter?' cried Kearney.

'I want to make her my wife, and as I know little about courtship, and have nobody here that could settle this affair for me—for Walpole is thinking of his own concerns—I've thought the best way, as it was the shortest, was to come at once to yourself: I have got a few documents here that will show you I have enough to live on, and to make a tidy settlement, and do all that ought to be done.'

'I'm sure you are an excellent fellow, and I like you myself; but you see, major, a man doesn't dispose of his daughter like his horse, and I'd like to hear what she would say to the bargain.'

'I suppose you could ask her?'

'Well, indeed, that's true, I could ask her; but on the whole, major, don't you think the question would come better from yourself?'

'That means courtship?'

'Yes, I admit it is liable to that objection, but somehow it's the usual course.'

'No, no,' said the other slowly, 'I could not manage that. I'm sick of bachelor life, and I'm ready to send in my papers and have done with it, but I don't know how to go about the other. Not to say, Kearney,' added he, more boldly, 'that I think there is something confoundedly mean in that daily pursuit of a woman, till by dint of importunity, and one thing or another, you get her to like you! What can she know of her own mind after three or four months of what these snobs call attentions?

How is she to say how much is mere habit, how much is gratified vanity of having a fellow dangling after her, how much the necessity of showing the world she is not compromised by the cad's solicitations? Take my word for it, Kearney, my way is the best. Be able to go up like a man and tell the girl, "It 's all arranged. I 've shown the old cove that I can take care of you, he has seen that I 've no debts or mortgages: I 'm ready to behave handsomely, what do you say yourself?'"

'She might say, "I know nothing about you. I may possibly not see much to dislike, but how do I know I should like you."'

'And I 'd say, "I 'm one of those fellows that are the same all through, to-day as I was yesterday, and to-morrow the same. When I 'm in a bad temper I go out on the moors and walk it off, and I 'm not hard to live with."'

'There 's many a bad fellow a woman might like better.'

'All the luckier for me, then, that I don't get her.'

'I might say, too,' said Kearney, with a smile, 'how much do you know of my daughter—of her temper, her tastes, her habits, and her likings? What assurance have you that you would suit each other, and that you are not as wide apart in character as in country?'

'I 'll answer for that. She 's always good-tempered, cheerful, and light-hearted. She 's always nicely dressed and polite to every one. She manages this old house, and these stupid bog-trotters, till one fancies it a fine establishment and a first-rate household. She rides like a lion, and I 'd rather hear her laugh than I 'd listen to Patti.'

'I 'll call all that mighty like being in love.'

'Do if you like—but answer me my question.'

'That is more than I 'm able; but I 'll consult my daughter. I 'll tell her pretty much in your own words all you have said to me, and she shall herself give the answer.'

'All right, and how soon?'

'Well, in the course of the day. Should she say that she does not understand being wooed in this manner, that she would like more time to learn something more about yourself, that, in fact, there is something too peremptory in this mode of proceeding, I would not say she was wrong.'

'But if she says Yes frankly, you 'll let me know at once.'

I will—on the spot.'

CHAPTER LXXIX

PLEASANT CONGRATULATIONS

The news of Nina's engagement to Walpole soon spread through the castle at Kilgobbin, and gave great satisfaction; even the humbler members of the household were delighted to think there would be a wedding and all its appropriate festivity.

When the tidings at length arrived at Miss O'Shea's room, so reviving were the effects upon her spirits, that the old lady insisted she should be dressed and carried down to the drawing-room that the bridegroom might be presented to her in all form.

Though Nina herself chafed at such a proceeding, and called it a most 'insufferable pretension,' she was perhaps not sorry secretly at the opportunity afforded herself to let the tiresome old woman guess how she regarded her, and what might be their future relations towards each other. 'Not indeed,' added she, 'that we are likely ever to meet again, or that I should recognise her beyond a bow if we should.'

As for Kearney, the announcement that Miss Betty was about to appear in public filled him with unmixed terror, and he muttered drearily as he went, 'There'll be wigs on the green for this.' Nor was Walpole himself pleased at the arrangement. Like most men in his position, he could not be brought to see the delicacy or the propriety of being paraded as an object of public inspection, nor did he perceive the fitness of that display of trinkets which he had brought with him as presents, and the sight of which had become a sort of public necessity.

Not the least strange part of the whole procedure was that no one could tell where or how or with whom it originated. It was like one of those movements which are occasionally seen in political life, where, without the direct intervention of any precise agent, a sort of diffused atmosphere of public opinion suffices to produce results and effect changes that all are ready to disavow but accept of.

The mere fact of the pleasure the prospect afforded to Miss Betty prevented Kate from offering opposition to what she felt to be both bad in taste and ridiculous.

'That the old lady imagines, I believe, that I am to come down like a *prétendu* in a French vaudeville—dressed in a tail-coat, with a white tie and white gloves, and perhaps receive her bene-

diction. She mistakes herself, she mistakes us. If there was a casket of uncouth old diamonds, or some marvellous old point lace to grace the occasion, we might play our parts with a certain decorous hypocrisy; but to be stared at through a double eye-glass by a snuffy old woman in black mittens, is more than one is called on to endure—eh, Lockwood?'

'I don't know. I think I'd go through it all gladly to have the occasion.'

'Have a little patience, old fellow, it will all come right. My worthy relatives—for I suppose I can call them so now—are too shrewd people to refuse the offer of such a fellow as you. They have that native pride that demands a certain amount of etiquette and deference. They must not seem to rise too eagerly to the fly; but only give them time—give them time, Lockwood.'

'Ay, but the waiting in this uncertainty is terrible to me.'

'Let it be certainty, then, and for very little I'll ensure you! Bear this in mind, my dear fellow, and you'll see how little need there is for apprehension. You—and the men like you—snug fellows with comfortable estates and no mortgages, unhampered by ties and uninfluenced by connections, are a species of plant that is rare everywhere, but actually never grew at all in Ireland, where every one spent double his income, and seldom dared to move a step without a committee of relations. Old Kearney has gone through that fat volume of the gentry and squirearchy of England last night, and from Sir Simon de Lockwood, who was killed at Crecy, down to a certain major in the Carbineers, he knows you all.'

'I'll bet you a thousand they say No.'

'I've not got a thousand to pay if I should lose, but I'll lay a pony—two, if you like—that you are an accepted man this day—ay, before dinner.'

'If I only thought so!'

'Confound it—you don't pretend you are in love!'

'I don't know whether I am or not, but I do know how I should like to bring that nice girl back to Hampshire, and install her at the Dingle. I've a tidy stable, some nice shooting, a good trout-stream, and then I should have the prettiest wife in the county.'

'Happy dog! Yours is the real philosophy of life. The fellows who are realistic enough to reckon up the material elements of their happiness—who have little to speculate on and less to unbelieve—they are right.'

'If you mean that I'll never break my heart because I don't get in for the county, that's true—I don't deny it. But come,

tell me, is it all settled about your business? Has the uncle been asked?—has he spoken?'

'He has been asked and given his consent. My distinguished father-in-law, the prince, has been telegraphed to this morning, and his reply may be here to-night or to-morrow. At all events, we are determined that even should he prove adverse, we shall not be deterred from our wishes by the caprice of a parent who has abandoned us.'

'It 's what people would call a love-match.'

'I sincerely trust it is. If her affections were not inextricably engaged, it is not possible that such a girl could pledge her future to a man as humble as myself.'

'That is, she is very much in love with *you*?'

'I hope the astonishment of your question does not arise from its seeming difficulty of belief?'

'No, not so much that, but I thought there might have been a little heroics, or whatever it is, on your side.'

'Most dull dragoon, do you not know that, so long as a man spoons, he can talk of his affection for a woman; but that, once she is about to be his wife, or is actually his wife, he limits his avowals to *her* love for *him*?'

'I never heard that before. I say, what a swell you are this morning. The cock-pheasants will mistake you for one of them.'

'Nothing can be simpler, nothing quieter, I trust, than a suit of dark purple knickerbockers; and you may see that my thread stockings and my coarse shoes presuppose a stroll in the plantations, where, indeed, I mean to smoke my morning cigar.'

'She 'll make you give up tobacco, I suppose?'

'Nothing of the kind—a thorough woman of the world enforces no such penalties as these. True free-trade is the great matrimonial maxim, and for people of small means it is inestimable. The formula may be stated thus—"Dine at the best houses, and give tea at your own."'

What other precepts of equal wisdom Walpole was prepared to enunciate were lost to the world by a message informing him that Miss Betty was in the drawing-room, and the family assembled, to see him.

Cecil Walpole possessed a very fair stock of that useful quality called assurance; but he had no more than he needed to enter that large room, where the family sat in a half-circle, and stand to be surveyed by Miss O'Shea's eye-glass, unabashed. Nor was the ordeal the less trying as he overheard the old lady ask her neighbour, 'if he wasn't the image of the Knave of Diamonds.'

'I thought you were the other man!' said she curtly, as he made his bow.

'I deplore the disappointment, madam—even though I do not comprehend it.'

'It was the picture, the photograph, of the other man I saw—a fine, tall, dark man, with long moustaches.'

'The fine, tall, dark man with the long moustaches, is in the house, and will be charmed to be presented to you.'

'Ay, ay! presented is all very fine; but that won't make him the bridegroom,' said she, with a laugh.

'I sincerely trust it will not, madam.'

'And it is you, then, are Major Walpole?'

'Mr. Walpole, madam—my friend Lockwood is the major.'

'To be sure. I have it right now. You are the young man that got into that unhappy scrape, and got the Lord Lieutenant turned away——'

'I wonder how you endure this,' burst out Nina, as she arose and walked angrily towards a window.

'I don't think I caught what the young lady said; but if it was, that what cannot be cured must be endured, it is true enough; and I suppose that they'll get over your blunder as they have done many another.'

'I live in that hope, madam.'

'Not but it's a bad beginning in public life; and a stupid mistake hangs long on a man's memory. You're young, however, and people are generous enough to believe it might be a youthful indiscretion.'

'You give me great comfort, madam.'

'And now you're going to risk another venture?'

'I sincerely trust on safer grounds.'

'That's what they all think. I never knew a man that didn't believe he drew the prize in matrimony. Ask him, however, six months after he's tied. Say, "What do you think of your ticket now?" Eh, Mat Kearney? It doesn't take twenty or thirty years quarrelling and disputing to show one that a lottery with so many blanks is just a swindle.'

A loud bang of the door, as Nina flounced out in indignation, almost shook the room.

'There's a temper you'll know more of yet, young gentleman; and, take my word for it, it's only in stage-plays that a shrew is ever tamed.'

'I declare,' cried Dick, losing all patience, 'I think Miss O'Shea is too unsparing of us all. We have our faults, I'm sure; but public correction will not make us more comfortable.'

'It wasn't *your* comfort I was thinking of, young man; and if I thought of your poor father's, I'd have advised him to put you out an apprentice. There's many a light business—like stationery, or figs, or children's toys—and they want just as little capital as capacity.'

'Miss Betty,' said Kearney stiffly, 'this is not the time nor the place for these discussions. Mr. Walpole was polite enough to present himself here to-day to have the honour of making your acquaintance, and to announce his future marriage.'

'A great event for us all—and we're proud of it! It's what the newspapers will call a great day for the Bog of Allen. Eh, Mat? The princess—God forgive me, but I'm always calling her Costigan—but the princess will be set down niece to Lord Kilgobbin; and if you'—and she addressed Walpole—'haven't a mock-title and a mock-estate, you'll be the only one without them!'

'I don't think any one will deny us our tempers,' cried Kearney.

'Here's Lockwood,' cried Walpole, delighted to see his friend enter, though he as quickly endeavoured to retreat.

'Come in, major,' said Kearney. 'We're all friends here. Miss O'Shea, this is Major Lockwood, of the Carbineers—Miss O'Shea.'

Lockwood bowed stiffly, but did not speak.

'Be attentive to the old woman,' whispered Walpole. 'A word from her will make your affair all right.'

'I have been very desirous to have had the honour of this introduction, madam,' said Lockwood, as he seated himself at her side.

'Was not that a clever diversion I accomplished with "the Heavy"?' said Walpole, as he drew away Kearney and his son into a window.

'I never heard her much worse than to-day,' said Dick.

'I don't know,' hesitated Kilgobbin. 'I suspect she is breaking. There is none of the sustained virulence I used to remember of old. She lapses into half-mildness at moments.'

'I own I did not catch them, nor, I'm afraid, did Nina,' said Dick. 'Look there! I'll be shot if she's not giving your friend the major a lesson! When she performs in that way with her hands, you may swear she is didactic.'

'I think I'll go to his relief,' said Walpole; 'but I own it's a case for the V.C.'

As Walpole drew nigh, he heard her saying: 'Marry one of your own race, and you will jog on well enough. Marry a French-

woman or a Spaniard, and she 'll lead her own life, and be very well satisfied; but a poor Irish girl, with a fresh heart and a joyous temper—what is to become of her, with your dull habits and your dreary intercourse, your county society and your Chinese manners!'

'Miss O'Shea is telling me that I must not look for a wife among her countrywomen,' said Lockwood, with a touching attempt to smile.

'What I overheard was not encouraging,' said Walpole; 'but I think Miss O'Shea takes a low estimate of our social temperament.'

'Nothing of the kind! All I say is, you 'll do mighty well for each other, or, for aught I know, you might intermarry with the Dutch or the Germans; but it 's a downright shame to unite your slow sluggish spirits with the sparkling brilliancy and impetuous joy of an Irish girl. That 's a union I 'd never consent to.'

'I hope this is no settled resolution,' said Walpole, speaking in a low whisper; 'for I want to bespeak your especial influence in my friend's behalf. Major Lockwood is a most impassioned admirer of Miss Kearney, and has already declared as much to her father.'

'Come over here, Mat Kearney! come over here this moment!' cried she, half wild with excitement. 'What new piece of roguery, what fresh intrigue is this? Will you dare to tell me you had a proposal for Kate, for my own god-daughter, without even so much as telling me?'

'My dear Miss Betty, be calm, be cool for one minute, and I 'll tell you everything.'

'Ay, when I 've found it out, Mat!'

'I profess I don't think my friend's pretensions are discussed with much delicacy, time and place considered,' said Walpole.

'We have something to think of as well as delicacy, young man: there 's a woman's happiness to be remembered.'

'Here it is, now, the whole business,' said Kearney. 'The major there asked me yesterday to get my daughter's consent to his addresses.'

'And you never told me,' cried Miss Betty.

'No, indeed, nor herself neither; for after I turned it over in my mind, I began to see it wouldn't do——'

'How do you mean not do?' asked Lockwood.

'Just let me finish. What I mean is this—if a man wants to marry an Irish girl, he mustn't begin by asking leave to make love to her——

'Mat 's right!' cried the old lady stoutly.

'And above all, he oughtn't to think that the short cut to her heart is through his broad acres.'

'Mat's quite right—quite right!'

'And besides this, that the more a man dwells on his belongings, and the settlements, and such like, the more he seems to say, "I may not catch your fancy in everything, I may not ride as boldly or dance as well as somebody else, but never mind—you're making a very prudent match, and there is a deal of pure affection in the Three per Cents."'

'And I'll give you another reason,' said Miss Betty resolutely. 'Kate Kearney cannot have two husbands, and I've made her promise to marry my nephew this morning.'

'What, without any leave of mine?' exclaimed Kearney.

'Just so, Mat. She'll marry him if you give your consent; but whether you will or not, she'll never marry another.'

'Is there, then, a real engagement?' whispered Walpole to Kearney. 'Has my friend here got his answer?'

'He'll not wait for another,' said Lockwood haughtily, as he arose. 'I'm for town, Cecil,' whispered he.

'So shall I be this evening,' replied Walpole, in the same tone. 'I must hurry over to London and see Lord Danesbury. I've my troubles too.' And so saying, he drew his arm within the major's, and led him away; while Miss Betty, with Kearney on one side of her and Dick on the other, proceeded to recount the arrangement she had made to make over the Barn and the estate to Gorman, it being her own intention to retire altogether from the world and finish her days in the 'Retreat.'

'And a very good thing to do, too,' said Kearney, who was too much impressed with the advantages of the project to remember his politeness.

'I have had enough of it, Mat,' added she, in a lugubrious tone; 'and it's all backbiting, and lying, and mischief-making, and what's worse, by the people who might live quietly and let others do the same!'

'What you say is true as the Bible.'

'It may be hard to do it, Mat Kearney, but I'll pray for them in my hours of solitude, and in that blessed Retreat I'll ask for a blessing on yourself, and that your heart, hard and cruel and worldly as it is now, may be changed; and that in your last days —maybe on the bed of sickness—when you are writhing and twisting with pain, with a bad heart and a worse conscience—when you'll have nobody but hirelings near you—hirelings that will be robbing you before your eyes, and not waiting till the breath leaves you—when even the drop of drink to cool your lips——'

'Don't—don't go on that way, Miss Betty. I've a cold shivering down the spine of my back this minute, and a sickness creeping all over me.'

'I'm glad of it. I'm glad that my words have power over your wicked old nature—if it's not too late.'

'If it's miserable and wretched you wanted to make me, don't fret about your want of success; though whether it all comes too late, I cannot tell you.'

'We'll leave that to St. Joseph.'

'Do so! do so!' cried he eagerly, for he had a shrewd suspicion he would have better chances of mercy at any hands than her own.

'As for Gorman, if I find that he has any notions about claiming an acre of the property, I'll put it all into Chancery, and the suit will outlive *him*; but if he owns he is entirely dependent on my bounty, I'll settle the Barn and the land on him, and the deed shall be signed the day he marries your daughter. People tell you that you can't take your money with you into the next world, Mat Kearney, and a greater lie was never uttered. Thanks to the laws of England, and the Court of Equity in particular, it's the very thing you can do! Ay, and you can provide, besides, that everybody but the people that had a right to it shall have a share. So I say to Gorman O'Shea, beware what you are at, and don't go on repeating that stupid falsehood about not carrying your debentures into the next world.'

'You are a wise woman, and you know life well,' said he solemnly.

'And if I am, it's nothing to sigh over, Mr. Kearney. One is grateful for mercies, but does not groan over them like rheumatism or the lumbago.'

'Maybe I'm a little out of spirits to-day.'

'I shouldn't wonder if you were. They tell me you sat over your wine, with that tall man, last night, till nigh one o'clock, and it's not at your time of life that you can do these sort of excesses with impunity; you had a good constitution once, and there's not much left of it.'

'My patience, I'm grateful to see, has not quite deserted me.'

'I hope there's other of your virtues you can be more sure of,' said she, rising, 'for if I was asked your worst failing, I'd say it was your irritability.' And with a stern frown, as though to confirm the judicial severity of her words, she nodded her head to him and walked away.

It was only then that Kearney discovered he was left alone, and that Dick had stolen away, though when or how he could not say.

'I'm glad the boy was not listening to her, for I'm downright ashamed that I bore it,' was his final reflection as he strolled out to take a walk in the plantation.

CHAPTER LXXX

A NEW ARRIVAL

Though the dinner-party that day at Kilgobbin Castle was deficient in the persons of Lockwood and Walpole, the accession of Joe Atlee to the company made up in a great measure for the loss. He arrived shortly before dinner was announced, and even in the few minutes in the drawing-room, his gay and lively manner, his pleasant flow of small talk, dashed with the lightest of epigrams, and that marvellous variety he possessed, made every one delighted with him.

'I met Walpole and Lockwood at the station, and did my utmost to make them turn back with me. You may laugh, Lord Kilgobbin, but in doing the honours of another man's house, as I was at that moment, I deem myself without a rival.'

'I wish with all my heart you had succeeded; there is nothing I like as much as a well-filled table,' said Kearney.

'Not that their air and manner,' resumed Joe, 'impressed me strongly with the exuberance of their spirits; a pair of drearier dogs I have not seen for some time, and I believe I told them so.'

'Did they explain their gloom, or even excuse it?' asked Dick.

'Except on the general grounds of coming away from such fascinating society. Lockwood played sulky, and scarcely vouchsafed a word, and as for Walpole, he made some high-flown speeches about his regrets and his torn sensibilities—so like what one reads in a French novel, that the very sound of them betrays unreality.'

'But was it, then, so very impossible to be sorry for leaving this?' asked Nina calmly.

'Certainly not for any man but Walpole.'

'And why not Walpole?'

'Can you ask me? You who know people so well, and read them so clearly; you to whom the secret anatomy of the "heart" is no mystery, and who understand how to trace the fibre of intense selfishness through every tissue of his small nature. He might be miserable at being separated from himself—there could be no other estrangement would affect *him*.'

'This was not always your estimate of your *friend*,' said Nina, with a marked emphasis of the last word.

'Pardon me, it was my unspoken opinion from the first hour I met him. Since then, some space of time has intervened, and though it has made no change in him, I hope it has dealt otherwise with me. I have at least reached the point in life where men not only have convictions but avow them.'

'Come, come; I can remember what precious good-luck you called it to make his acquaintance,' cried Dick, half angrily.

'I don't deny it. I was very nigh drowning at the time, and it was the first plank I caught hold of. I am very grateful to him for the rescue; but I owe him more gratitude for the opportunity the incident gave me to see these men in their intimacy—to know, and know thoroughly, what is the range, what the stamp of those minds by which states are ruled and masses are governed. Through Walpole I knew his master; and through the master I have come to know the slipshod intelligences which, composed of official detail, House of Commons' gossip, and *Times'* leaders, are accepted by us as statesmen. And if——' A very supercilious smile on Nina's mouth arrested him in the current of his speech, and he said, 'I know, of course, I know the question you are too polite to ask, but which quivers on your lip: "Who is the gifted creature that sees all this incompetence and insufficiency around him?" And I am quite ready to tell you. It is Joseph Atlee—Joseph Atlee, who knows that when he and others like him—for we are a strong coterie—stop the supply of ammunition, these gentlemen must cease firing. Let the *Débats* and the *Times*, the *Revue des Deux Mondes* and the *Saturday*, and a few more that I need not stop to enumerate, strike work, and let us see how much of original thought you will obtain from your Cabinet sages! It is in the clash and collision of the thinkers outside of responsibility that these world-revered leaders catch the fire that lights up their policy. The *Times* made the Crimean blunder. The *Siècle* created the Mexican fiasco. The *Kreuz Zeitung* gave the first impulse to the Schleswig-Holstein imbroglio; and if I mistake not, the "review" in the last *Diplomatic Chronicle* will bear results of which he who now speaks to you will not disown the parentage.'

'The saints be praised! here's dinner,' exclaimed Kearney, 'or this fellow would talk us into a brain-fever. Kate is dining with Miss Betty again—God bless her for it,' muttered he as he gave his arm to Nina, and led the way.

'I've got you a commission as a "peeler," Dick,' said Joe, as they moved along. 'You'll have to prove that you can read and

write, which is more than they would ask of you if you were going into the Cabinet; but we live in an intellectual age, and we test all the cabin-boys, and it is only the steersman we take on trust.'

Though Nina was eager to resent Atlee's impertinence on Walpole, she could not help feeling interested and amused by his sketches of his travels.

If, in speaking of Greece, he only gave the substance of the article he had written for the *Revue des Deux Mondes*, as the paper was yet unpublished all the remarks were novel, and the anecdotes fresh and sparkling. The tone of light banter and raillery in which he described public life in Greece and Greek statesmen, might have lost some of its authority had any one remembered to count the hours the speaker had spent in Athens; and Nina was certainly indignant at the hazardous effrontery of the criticisms. It was not, then, without intention that she arose to retire while Atlee was relating an interesting story of brigandage, and he—determined to repay the impertinence in kind—continued to recount his history as he arose to open the door for her to pass out. Her insolent look as she swept by was met by a smile of admiration on his part that actually made her cheek tingle with anger.

Old Kearney dozed off gently, under the influence of names of places and persons that did not interest him, and the two young men drew their chairs to the fire, and grew confidential at once.

'I think you have sent my cousin away in bad humour,' said Dick.

'I see it,' said Joe, as he slowly puffed his cigar. 'That young lady's head has been so cruelly turned by flattery of late, that the man who does not swing incense before her affronts her.'

'Yes; but you went out of your way to provoke her. It is true she knows little of Greece or Greeks, but it offends her to hear them slighted or ridiculed; and you took pains to do both.'

'Contemptible little country! with a mock-army, a mock-treasury, and a mock-chamber. The only thing real is the debt and the brigandage.'

'But why tell her so? You actually seemed bent on irritating her.'

'Quite true—so I was. My dear Dick, you have some lessons to learn in life, and one of them is that, just as it is bad heraldry to put colour on colour, it is an egregious blunder to follow flattery by flattery. The woman who has been spoiled by over-

admiration must be approached with something else as unlike it as may be—pique—annoy—irritate—outrage, but take care that you interest her. Let her only come to feel what a very tiresome thing mere adulation is, and she will one day value your two or three civil speeches as gems of priceless worth. It is exactly because I deeply desire to gain her affections, I have begun in this way.'

'You have come too late.'

'How do you mean too late—she is not engaged?'

'She is engaged—she is to be married to Walpole.'

'To Walpole!'

'Yes; he came over a few days ago to ask her. There is some question now—I don't well understand it—about some family consent, or an invitation—something, I believe, that Nina insists on, to show the world how his family welcome her amongst them; and it is for this he has gone to London, but to be back in eight or nine days, the wedding to take place towards the end of the month.'

'Is he very much in love?'

'I should say he is.'

'And she Of course she could not possibly care for a fellow like Walpole?'

'I don't see why not. He is very much the stamp of man girls admire.'

'Not girls like Nina; not girls who aspire to a position in life, and who know that the little talents of the salon no more make a man of the world than the tricks of the circus will make a foxhunter. These ambitious women—she is one of them—will marry a hopeless idiot if he can bring wealth and rank and a great name; but they will not take a brainless creature who has to work his way up in the world. If she has accepted Walpole, there is pique in it, or ennui, or that uneasy desire of change that girls suffer from like a malady.'

'I cannot tell you why, but I know she has accepted him.'

'Women are not insensible to the value of second thoughts.'

'You mean she might throw him over—might jilt him?'

'I'll not employ the ugly word that makes the wrong it is only meant to indicate; but there are few of our resolves in life to which we might not move amendment, and the changed opinion a woman forms of a man before marriage would become a grievous injury if it happened after.'

'But must she of necessity change?'

'If she marry Walpole, I should say certainly. If a girl has fair abilities and a strong temper—and Nina has a good share

of each—she will endure faults, actual vices, in a man, but she'll not stand littleness. Walpole has nothing else; and so I hope to prove to her to-morrow and the day after—in fact, during those eight or ten days you tell me he will be absent.'

'Will she let you? Will she listen to you?'

'Not at first—at least, not willingly, or very easily; but I will show her, by numerous little illustrations and even fables, where these small people not only spoil their fortunes in life, but spoil life itself; and what an irreparable blunder it is to link companionship with one of them. I will sometimes make her laugh, and I may have to make her cry—it will not be easy, but I shall do it—I shall certainly make her thoughtful; and if you can do this day by day, so that a woman will recur to the same theme pretty much in the same spirit, you must be a sorry steersman, Master Dick, but you will know how to guide these thoughts and trace the channel they shall follow.'

'And supposing, which I do not believe, that you could get her to break with Walpole, what could *you* offer her?'

'Myself!'

'Inestimable boon, doubtless; but what of fortune—position or place in life?'

'The first Napoleon used to say that the "power of the unknown number was incommensurable"; and so I don't despair of showing her that a man like myself may be anything.'

Dick shook his head doubtingly, and the other went on: 'In this round game we call life it is all "brag." The fellow with the worst card in the pack, if he'll only risk his head on it, keep a bold face to the world and his own counsel, will be sure to win. Bear in mind, Dick, that for some time back I have been keeping the company of these great swells who sit highest in the Synagogue, and dictate to us small Publicans. I have listened to their hesitating counsels and their uncertain resolves; I have seen the blotted despatches and equivocal messages given, to be disavowed if needful; I have assisted at those dress rehearsals where speech was to follow speech, and what seemed an incautious avowal by one was to be "improved" into a bold declaration by another "in another place"; in fact, my good friend, I have been near enough to measure the mighty intelligences that direct us, and if I were not a believer in Darwin, I should be very much shocked for what humanity was coming to. It is no exaggeration that I say, if you were to be in the Home Office, and I at the Foreign Office, without our names being divulged, there is not a man or woman in England would be the wiser or the worse; though if either of us were to take charge of the engine of the

Holyhead line, there would be a smash or an explosion before we reached Rugby.'

'All that will not enable you to make a settlement on Nina Kostalergi.'

'No; but I'll marry her all the same.'

'I don't think so.'

'Will you have a bet on it, Dick? What will you wager?'

'A thousand—ten, if I had it; but I'll give you ten pounds on it, which is about as much as either of us could pay.'

'Speak for yourself, Master Dick. As Robert Macaire says, "*Je viens de toucher mes dividendes*," and I am in no want of money. The fact is, so long as a man can pay for certain luxuries in life, he is well off: the strictly necessary takes care of itself.'

'Does it? I should like to know how.'

'With your present limited knowledge of life, I doubt if I could explain it to you, but I will try one of these mornings. Meanwhile, let us go into the drawing-room and get mademoiselle to sing for us. She will sing, I take it?'

'Of course—if asked by you.' And there was the very faintest tone of sneer in the words.

And they did go, and mademoiselle did sing all that Atlee could ask her for, and she was charming in every way that grace and beauty and the wish to please could make her. Indeed, to such extent did she carry her fascinations that Joe grew thoughtful at last, and muttered to himself, 'There is vendetta in this. It is only a woman knows how to make a vengeance out of her attractions.'

'Why are you so serious, Mr. Atlee?' asked she at last.

'I was thinking—I mean, I was trying to think—yes, I remember it now,' muttered he. 'I have had a letter for you all this time in my pocket.'

'A letter from Greece?' asked she impatiently.

'No—at least I suspect not. It was given me as I drove through the bog by a barefooted boy, who had trotted after the car for miles, and at length overtook us by the accident of the horse picking up a stone in his hoof. He said it was for "some one at the castle," and I offered to take charge of it—here it is,' and he produced a square-shaped envelope of common coarse-looking paper, sealed with red wax, and a shamrock for impress.

'A begging-letter, I should say, from the outside,' said Dick.

'Except that there is not one so poor as to ask aid from me,' added Nina, as she took the document, glanced at the writing, and placed it in her pocket.

As they separated for the night, and Dick trotted up the stairs

at Atlee's side, he said, 'I don't think, after all, my ten pounds is so safe as I fancied.'

'Don't you?' replied Joe. 'My impressions are all the other way, Dick. It is her courtesy that alarms me. The effort to captivate where there is no stake to win, means mischief. She'll make me in love with her whether I will or not.' The bitterness of his tone, and the impatient bang he gave his door as he passed in, betrayed more of temper than was usual for him to display, and as Dick sought his room, he muttered to himself, 'I'm glad to see that these over-cunning fellows are sure to meet their match, and get beaten even at the game of their own invention.'

CHAPTER LXXXI

AN UNLOOKED-FOR CORRESPONDENT

It was no uncommon thing for the tenants to address petitions and complaints in writing to Kate, and it occurred to Nina as not impossible that some one might have bethought him of entreating her intercession in their favour. The look of the letter, and the coarse wax, and the writing, all in a measure strengthened this impression, and it was in the most careless of moods she broke the envelope, scarcely caring to look for the name of the writer, whom she was convinced must be unknown to her.

She had just let her hair fall freely down on her neck and shoulders, and was seated in a deep chair before her fire, as she opened the paper and read, 'Mademoiselle Kostalergi.' This beginning, so unlikely for a peasant, made her turn for the name, and she read, in a large full hand, the words 'Daniel Donogan.' So complete was her surprise, that to satisfy herself there was no trick or deception, she examined the envelope and the seal, and reflected for some minutes over the mode in which the document had come to her hands. Atlee's story was a very credible one: nothing more likely than that the boy was charged to deliver the letter at the castle, and simply sought to spare himself so many miles of way, or it might be that he was enjoined to give it to the first traveller he met on his road to Kilgobbin. Nina had little doubt that if Atlee guessed or had reason to know the writer, he would have treated the letter as a secret missive which would give him a certain power over her.

These thoughts did not take her long, and she turned once more to the letter. 'Poor fellow,' said she aloud, 'why does he write to *me*?' And her own voice sent back its surmises to her;

and as she thought over him standing on the lonely road, his clasped hands before him, and his hair wafted wildly back from his uncovered head, two heavy tears rolled slowly down her cheeks and dropped upon her neck. 'I am sure he loved me—I know he loved me,' muttered she, half aloud. 'I have never seen in any eye the same expression that his wore as he lay that morning in the grass. It was not veneration, it was genuine adoration. Had I been a saint and wanted worship, there was the very offering that I craved—a look of painful meaning, made up of wonder and devotion, a something that said: take what course you may, be wilful, be wayward, be even cruel, I am your slave. You may not think me worthy of a thought, you may be so indifferent as to forget me utterly, but my life from this hour has but one spell to charm, one memory to sustain it. It needed not his last words to me to say that my image would lay on his heart for ever. Poor fellow, *I* need not have been added to his sorrows, he has had his share of trouble without *me*!'

It was some time ere she could return to the letter, which ran thus:—

'Mademoiselle Kostalergi,—You once rendered me a great service—not alone at some hazard to yourself, but by doing what must have cost you sorely. It is now *my* turn; and if the act of repayment is not equal to the original debt, let me ask you to believe that it taxes *my* strength even more than *your* generosity once taxed your own.

'I came here a few days since in the hope that I might see you before I leave Ireland for ever; and while waiting for some fortunate chance, I learned that you were betrothed and to be married to the young gentleman who lies ill at Kilgobbin, and whose approaching trial at the assizes is now the subject of so much discussion. I will not tell you—I have no right to tell you—the deep misery with which these tidings filled me. It was no use to teach my heart how vain and impossible were all my hopes with regard to you. It was to no purpose that I could repeat over aloud to myself how hopeless my pretensions must be. My love for you had become a religion, and what I could deny to a hope, I could still believe. Take that hope away, and I could not imagine how I should face my daily life, how interest myself in its ambitions, and even care to live on.

'These sad confessions cannot offend you, coming from one even as humble as I am. They are all that are left me for consolation—they will soon be all I shall have for memory. The little lamp in the lowly shrine comforts the kneeling worshipper

far more than it honours the saint; and the love I bear you is such as this. Forgive me if I have dared these utterances. To save him with whose fortunes your own are to be bound up became at once my object; and as I knew with what ingenuity and craft his ruin had been compassed, it required all my efforts to baffle his enemies. The National press and the National party have made a great cause of this trial, and determined that tenant-right should be vindicated in the person of this man Gill.

'I have seen enough of what is intended here to be aware what mischief may be worked by hard swearing, a violent press, and a jury not insensible to public opinion—evils, if you like, but evils that are less of our own growing than the curse ill-government has brought upon us. It has been decided in certain councils—whose decrees are seldom gainsaid—that an example shall be made of Captain Gorman O'Shea, and that no effort shall be spared to make his case a terror and a warning to Irish land-owners; how they attempt by ancient process of law to subvert the concessions we have wrung from our tyrants.

'A jury to find him guilty will be sworn; and let us see the judge—in defiance of a verdict given from the jury-box, without a moment's hesitation or the shadow of dissent—let us see the judge who will dare to diminish the severity of the sentence. This is the language, these are the very words of those who have more of the rule of Ireland in their hands than the haughty gentlemen, honourable and right honourable, who sit at Whitehall.

'I have heard this opinion too often of late to doubt how much it is a fixed determination of the party; and until now—until I came here, and learned what interest his fate could have for me—I offered no opposition to these reasonings. Since then I have bestirred myself actively. I have addressed the committee here who have taken charge of the prosecution; I have written to the editors of the chief newspapers; I have even made a direct appeal to the leading counsel for the prosecution, and tried to persuade them that a victory here might cost us more than a defeat, and that the country at large, who submit with difficulty to the verdict of absolving juries, will rise with indignation at this evidence of a jury prepared to exercise a vindictive power, and actually make the law the agent of reprisal. I have failed in all—utterly failed. Some reproach me as faint-hearted and craven; some condescend to treat me as merely mistaken and misguided; and some are bold enough to hint that, though as a military authority I stand without rivalry, as a purely political adviser, my counsels are open to dispute.

'I have still a power, however, through the organisation of

which I am a chief; and by this power I have ordered Gill to appear before me, and in obedience to my commands, he will sail this night for America. With him will also leave the two other important witnesses in this cause; so that the only evidence against Captain O'Shea will be some of those against whom he has himself instituted a cross charge for assault. That the prosecution can be carried on with such testimony need not be feared. Our press will denounce the infamous arts by which these witnesses have been tampered with, and justice has been defeated. The insults they may hurl at our oppressors—for once unjustly—will furnish matter for the Opposition journals to inveigh against our present Government, and some good may come even of this. At all events, I shall have accomplished what I sought. I shall have saved from a prison the man I hate most on earth, the man who, robbing me of what never could be mine, robs me of every hope, of every ambition, making my love as worthless as my life! Have I not repaid you? Ask your heart which of us has done more for the other?

'The contract on which Gill based his right as a tenant, and which would have sustained his action, is now in my hands; and I will—if you permit me—place it in yours. This may appear an ingenious device to secure a meeting with you; but though I long to see you once more, were it but a minute, I would not compass it by a fraud. If, then, you will not see me, I shall address the packet to you through the post.

'I have finished. I have told you what it most concerns you to know, and what chiefly regards your happiness. I have done this as coldly and impassively, I hope, as though I had no other part in the narrative than that of the friend whose friendship had a blessed office. I have not told you of the beating heart that hangs over this paper, nor will I darken one bright moment of your fortune by the gloom of mine. If you will write me one line—a farewell if it must be—send it to the care of Adam Cobb, "Cross Keys," Moate, where I shall find it up to Thursday next. If—and oh! how shall I bless you for it—if you will consent to see me, to say one word, to let me look on you once more, I shall go into my banishment with a bolder heart, as men go into battle with an amulet. DANIEL DONOGAN.'

'Shall I show this to Kate?' was the first thought of Nina as she laid the letter down. 'Is it a breach of confidence to let another than myself read these lines? Assuredly they were meant for my eyes alone. Poor fellow!' said she, once more aloud. 'It was very noble in him to do this for one he could

not but regard as a rival.' And then she asked herself how far it might consist with honour to derive benefit from his mistake—since mistake it was—in believing O'Shea was her lover, and to be her future husband.

'There can be little doubt Donogan would never have made the sacrifice had he known that I am about to marry Walpole.' From this she rambled on to speculate on how far might Donogan's conduct compromise or endanger him with his own party, and if —which she thought well probable—there was a distinct peril in what he was doing, whether he would have incurred that peril if he really knew the truth, and that it was not herself he was serving.

The more she canvassed these doubts, the more she found the difficulty of resolving them, nor indeed was there any other way than one—distinctly to ask Donogan if he would persist in his kind intentions when he knew that the benefit was to revert to her cousin and not to herself. So far as the evidence of Gill at the trial was concerned, the man's withdrawal was already accomplished, but would Donogan be as ready to restore the lease, and would he, in fact, be as ready to confront the danger of all this interference, as at first? She could scarcely satisfy her mind how she would wish him to act in the contingency! She was sincerely fond of Kate, she knew all the traits of honesty and truth in that simple character, and she valued the very qualities of straightforwardness and direct purpose in which she knew she was herself deficient. She would have liked well to secure that dear girl's happiness, and it would have been an exquisite delight to her to feel that she had been an aid to her welfare; and yet, with all this, there was a subtle jealousy that tortured her in thinking, 'What will this man have done to prove his love for *me*? Where am I, and what are my interests in all this?' There was a poison in this doubt that actually extended to a state of fever. 'I must see him,' she said at last, speaking aloud to herself. 'I must let him know the truth. If what he proposes shall lead him to break with his party or his friends, it is well he should see for what and for whom he is doing it.'

And then she persuaded herself she would like to hear Donogan talk, as once before she had heard him talk, of his hopes and his ambitions. There was something in the high-sounding inspirations of the man, a lofty heroism in all he said, that struck a chord in her Greek nature. The cause that was so intensely associated with danger that life was always on the issue, was exactly the thing to excite her heart, and, like the trumpet-blast to the charger, she felt stirred to her inmost soul by whatever appealed

to reckless daring and peril. 'He shall tell me what he intends to do—his plans, his projects, and his troubles. He shall tell me of his hopes, what he desires in the future, and where he himself will stand when his efforts have succeeded; and oh!' thought she, 'are not the wild extravagances of these men better a thousand times than the well-turned nothings of the fine gentlemen who surround us? Are not their very risks and vicissitudes more manly teachings than the small casualties of the polished world? If life were all "salon," taste perhaps might decide against them; but it is not all "salon," or, if it were, it would be a poorer thing even than I think it!' She turned to her desk as she said this, and wrote:—

'Dear Mr. Donogan,—I wish to thank you in person for the great kindness you have shown me, though there is some mistake on your part in the matter. I cannot suppose you are able to come here openly, but if you will be in the garden on Saturday evening at 9 o'clock, I shall be there to meet you. I am, very truly yours, Nina Kostalergi.'

'Very imprudent—scarcely delicate—perhaps, all this, and for a girl who is to be married to another man in some three weeks hence, but I will tell Cecil Walpole all when he returns, and if he desires to be off his engagement, he shall have the liberty. I have one-half at least of the Bayard Legend, and if I cannot say I am "without reproach," I am certainly without fear.'

The letter-bag lay in the hall, and Nina went down at once and deposited her letter in it; this done, she lay down on her bed, not to sleep, but to think over Donogan and his letter till daybreak.

CHAPTER LXXXII

THE BREAKFAST-ROOM

'Strange house this,' said Joseph Atlee, as Nina entered the room the next morning where he sat alone at breakfast. 'Lord Kilgobbin and Dick were here a moment ago, and disappeared suddenly; Miss Kearney for an instant, and also left as abruptly; and now you have come, I most earnestly hope not to fly away in the same fashion.'

'No; I mean to eat my breakfast, and so far to keep you company.'

'I thank the tea-urn for my good fortune,' said he solemnly.

'A *tête-à-tête* with Mr. Atlee is a piece of good-luck,' said Nina, as she sat down. 'Has anything occurred to call our hosts away?'

'In a house like this,' said he jocularly, 'where people are marrying or giving in marriage at every turn, what may not happen? It may be a question of the settlement, or the bride-cake, or white satin "slip"—if that's the name for it—the orange-flowers, or the choice of the best man—who knows?'

'You seem to know the whole bead-roll of wedding incidents.'

'It is a dull *répertoire* after all, for whether the piece be melodrama, farce, genteel comedy, or harrowing tragedy, it has to be played by the same actors.'

'What would you have—marriages cannot be all alike. There must be many marriages for things besides love: for ambition, for interest, for money, for convenience.'

'Convenience is exactly the phrase I wanted and could not catch.'

'It is not the word *I* wanted, nor do I think we mean the same thing by it.'

'What I mean is this,' said Atlee, with a firm voice, 'that when a young girl has decided in her own mind that she has had enough of that social bondage of the daughter, and cannot marry the man she would like, she will marry the man that she can.'

'And like him too,' added Nina, with a strange, dubious sort of smile.

'Yes, and like him too; for there is a curious feature in the woman's nature that, without any falsehood or disloyalty, permits her to like different people in different ways, so that the quiet, gentle, almost impassive woman might, if differently mated, have been a being of fervid temper, headstrong and passionate. If it were not for this species of accommodation, marriage would be a worse thing than it is.'

'I never suspected you of having made a study of the subject. Since when have you devoted your attention to the theme?'

'I could answer in the words of Wilkes—since I have had the honour to know your Royal Highness; but perhaps you might be displeased with the flippancy.'

'I should think that very probable,' said she gravely.

'Don't look so serious. Remember that I did not commit myself after all.'

'I thought it was possible to discuss this problem without a personality.'

'Don't you know that, let one deal in abstractions as long as he will, he is only skirmishing around special instances. It is out of what I glean from individuals I make up my generalities.'

'Am I to understand by this that I have supplied you with the material of one of these reflections?'

'You have given me the subject of many. If I were to tell you how often I have thought of you, I could not answer for the words in which I might tell it.'

'Do not tell it, then.'

'I know—I am aware—I have heard since I came here that there is a special reason why you could not listen to me.'

'And being so, why do you propose that I should hear you?'

'I will tell you,' said he, with an earnestness that almost startled her: 'I will tell you, because there are things on which a doubt or an equivocation are actually maddening; and I will not, I cannot, believe that you have accepted Cecil Walpole.'

'Will you please to say why it should seem so incredible?'

'Because I have seen you not merely in admiration, and that admiration would be better conveyed by a stronger word; and because I have measured you with others infinitely beneath you in every way, and who are yet soaring into very high regions indeed; because I have learned enough of the world to know that alongside of—often above—the influence that men are wielding in life by their genius and their capacity, there is another power exercised by women of marvellous beauty, of infinite attractions, and exquisite grace, which sways and moulds the fate of mankind far more than Cabinets and Councils. There are not above half a dozen of these in Europe, and you might be one added to the number.'

'Even admitting all this—and I don't see that I should go so far—it is no answer to my question.'

'Must I then say there can be no—not companionship, that's not the word; no, I must take the French expression, and call it *solidarité*—there can be no *solidarité* of interests, of objects, of passions, or of hopes, between people so widely dissevered as you and Walpole. I am so convinced of this, that still I can dare to declare I cannot believe you could marry him.'

'And if I were to tell you it were true?

'I should still regard it as a passing caprice, that the mere mention of to-morrow would offend you. It is no disparagement of Walpole to say he is unworthy of you, for who would be worthy? but the presumption of his daring is enough to excite indignation—at least, I feel it such. How he could dare to link his supreme littleness with consummate perfection; to freight the miserable barque of his fortunes with so precious a cargo; to encounter the feeling—and there is no escape for it—"I must drag that woman down, not alone into obscurity, but into all the

sordid meanness of a small condition, that never can emerge into anything better." He cannot disguise from himself that it is not within his reach to attain power, or place, or high consideration. Such men make no name in life; they leave no mark on their time. They are heaven-born subordinates, and never refute their destiny. Does a woman with ambition—does a woman conscious of her own great merits—condescend to ally herself, not alone with small fortune—that might be borne—but with the smaller associations that make up these men's lives? with the peddling efforts to mount even one rung higher of that crazy little ladder of their ambition—to be a clerk of another grade—a creature of some fifty pounds more—a being in an upper office?'

'And the prince—for he ought to be at least a prince who should make me the offer of his name—whence is he to come, Mr. Atlee?'

'There are men who are not born to princely station, who by their genius and their determination are just as sure to become famous, and who need but the glorious prize of such a woman's love—— No, no, don't treat what I say as rant and rodomontade; these are words of sober sense and seriousness.'

'Indeed!' said she, with a faint sigh. 'So that it really amounts to this—that I shall actually have missed my whole fortune in life—thrown myself away—all because I would not wait for Mr. Atlee to propose to me.'

Nothing less than Atlee's marvellous assurance and self-possession could have sustained this speech unabashed.

'You have only said what my heart has told me many a day since.'

'But you seem to forget,' added she, with a very faint curl of scorn on her lip, 'that I had no more to guide me to the discovery of Mr. Atlee's affection than that of his future greatness. Indeed, I could more readily believe in the latter than the former.'

'Believe in both,' cried he warmly. 'If I have conquered difficulties in life, if I have achieved some successes—now for a passing triumph, now for a moment of gratified vanity, now for a mere caprice—try me by a mere hope—I only plead for a hope—try me by hope of being one day worthy of calling that hand my own.'

As he spoke, he tried to grasp her hand; but she withdrew it coldly and slowly, saying, 'I have no fancy to make myself the prize of any success in life, political or literary; nor can I believe that the man who reasons in this fashion has any really high

ambition. Mr. Atlee,' added she, more gravely, 'your memory may not be as good as mine, and you will pardon me if I remind you that, almost at our first meeting, we struck up a sort of friendship, on the very equivocal ground of a common country. We agreed that each of us claimed for their native land the mythical Bohemia, and we agreed, besides, that the natives of that country are admirable colleagues, but not good partners.'

'You are not quite fair in this,' he began; but before he could say more Dick Kearney entered hurriedly, and cried out, 'It's all true. The people are in wild excitement, and all declare that they will not let him be taken. Oh! I forgot,' added he. 'You were not here when my father and I were called away by the despatch from the police-station, to say that Donogan has been seen at Moate, and is about to hold a meeting on the bog. Of course, this is mere rumour; but the constabulary are determined to capture him, and Curtis has written to inform my father that a party of police will patrol the grounds here this evening.'

'And if they should take him, what would happen—to him, I mean?' asked Nina coldly.

'An escaped convict is usually condemned to death; but I suppose they would not hang him,' said Dick.

'Hang him!' cried Atlee; 'nothing of the kind. Mr. Gladstone would present him with a suit of clothes, a tenpound note, and a first-class passage to America. He would make a "healing measure" of him.'

'I must say, gentlemen,' said Nina scornfully, 'you can discuss your friend's fate with a marvellous equanimity.'

'So we do,' rejoined Atlee. 'He is another Bohemian.'

'Don't say so, sir,' said she passionately. 'The men who put their lives on a venture—and that venture not a mere gain to themselves—are in nowise the associates of those poor adventurers who are gambling for their daily living. He is a rebel, if you like; but he believes in rebellion. How much do you believe in, Mr. Atlee?'

'I say, Joe, you are getting the worst of this discussion. Seriously, however, I hope they'll not catch poor Donogan; and my father has asked Curtis to come over and dine here, and I trust to a good fire and some old claret to keep him quiet for this evening, at least. We must not molest the police; but there's no great harm done if we mislead them.'

'Once in the drawing-room, if Mademoiselle Kostalergi will only condescend to aid us,' added Atlee, 'I think Curtis will be more than a chief constable if he will bethink him of his duty.'

'You are a strange set of people, you Irish, said Nina, as she

walked away. 'Even such of you as don't want to overthrow the Government are always ready to impede its march and contribute to its difficulties.'

'She only meant that for an impertinence,' said Atlee, after she left the room; 'but she was wonderfully near the truth, though not truthfully expressed.'

CHAPTER LXXXIII

THE GARDEN BY MOONLIGHT

THERE was but one heavy heart at the dinner-table that day; but Nina's pride was proof against any disclosure of suffering, and though she was tortured by anxiety and fevered with doubt, none —not even Kate—suspected that any care weighed on her.

As for Kate herself, her happiness beamed in every line and lineament of her handsome face. The captain—to give him the name by which he was known—had been up that day, and partaken of an afternoon tea with his aunt and Kate. Her spirits were excellent, and all the promise of the future was rose-coloured and bright. The little cloud of what trouble the trial might bring was not suffered to darken the cheerful meeting, and it was the one only bitter in their cup.

To divert Curtis from this theme, on which, with the accustomed *mal à propos* of an awkward man, he wished to talk, the young men led him to the subject of Donogan and his party.

'I believe we 'll take him this time,' said Curtis. 'He must have some close relations with some one about Moate or Kilbeggan, for it is remarked he cannot keep away from the neighbourhood; but who are his friends, or what they are meditating, we cannot guess.'

'If what Mademoiselle Kostalergi said this morning be correct,' remarked Atlee, 'conjecture is unnecessary. She told Dick and myself that every Irishman is at heart a rebel.'

'I said more or less of one, Mr. Atlee, since there are some who have not the courage of their opinions.'

'I hope you are gratified by the emendation,' whispered Dick; and then added aloud, 'Donogan is not one of these.'

'He 's a consummate fool,' cried Curtis bluntly. 'He thinks the attack of a police-barrack or the capture of a few firelocks will revolutionise Ireland.'

'He forgets that there are twelve thousand police, officered by such men as yourself, captain,' said Nina gravely.

'Well, there might be worse,' rejoined Curtis doggedly, for he was not quite sure of the sincerity of the speaker.

'What will you be the better of taking him?' said Kilgobbin. 'If the whole tree be pernicious, where's the use of plucking one leaf off it?'

'The captain has nothing to do with that,' said Atlee, 'any more than a hound has to discuss the morality of fox-hunting—his business is the pursuit.'

'I don't like your simile, Mr. Atlee,' said Nina, while she whispered some words to the captain, and drew him in this way into a confidential talk.

'I don't mind him at all, Miss Nina,' said Curtis; 'he's one of those fellows on the press, and they are always saying impertinent things to keep their talents in wind. I'll tell you, in confidence, how wrong he is. I have just had a meeting with the Chief Secretary, who told me that the popish bishops are not at all pleased with the leniency of the Government; that whatever "healing measures" Mr. Gladstone contemplates, ought to be for the Church and the Catholics; that the Fenians or the Nationalists are the enemies of the Holy Father; and that the time has come for the Government to hunt them down, and give over the rule of Ireland to the Cardinal and his party.'

'That seems to me very reasonable, and very logical,' said Nina.

'Well, it is and it is not. If you want peace in the rabbit-warren, you must banish either the rats or the rabbits; and I suppose either the Protestants or the Papists must have it their own way here.'

'Then you mean to capture this man?'

'We do—we are determined on that. And, what's more, I'd hang him if I had the power.'

'And why?'

'Just because he isn't a bad fellow! There's no use in hanging a bad fellow in Ireland—it frightens nobody; but if you hang a respectable man, a man that has done generous and fine things, it produces a great effect on society, and is a terrible example.'

'There may be a deep wisdom in what you say.'

'Not that they'll mind me for all that. It's the men like myself, Miss Nina, who know Ireland well, who know every assize town in the country, and what the juries will do in each, are never consulted in England. They say, "Let Curtis catch him—that's his business."'

'And how will you do it?'

'I'll tell you. I haven't men enough to watch all the roads; but I'll take care to have my people where he's least likely to

go, that is, to the north. He's a cunning fellow is Dan, and he'd make for the Shannon if he could; but now that he knows we're after him, he'll turn to Antrim or Derry. He'll cut across Westmeath, and make north, if he gets away from this.'

'That is a very acute calculation of yours; and where do you suspect he may be now—I mean, at this moment we're talking?'

'He's not three miles from where we're sitting,' said he, in a low whisper, and a cautious glance round the table. 'He's hid in the bog outside. There's scores of places there a man could hide in, and never be tracked; and there's few fellows would like to meet Donogan single-handed. He's as active as a rope-dancer, and he's as courageous as the devil.'

'It would be a pity to hang such a fellow.'

'There's plenty more of the same sort—not exactly as good as him, perhaps, for Dan was a gentleman once.'

'And is, probably, still?'

'It would be hard for him, with the rapscallions he has to live with, and not five shillings in his pocket, besides.'

'I don't know, after all, if you'll be happier for giving him up to the law. He may have a mother, a sister, a wife, or a sweetheart.'

'He may have a sweetheart, but I know he has none of the others. He said, in the dock, that no man could quit life at less cost—that there wasn't one to grieve after him.'

'Poor fellow! that was a sad confession.'

'We're not all to turn Fenians, Miss Nina, because we're only children and unmarried.'

'You are too clever for me to dispute with,' said she, in affected humility; 'but I like greatly to hear you talk of Ireland. Now, what number of people have you here?'

'I have my orderly, and two men to patrol the demesne; but to-morrow we'll draw the net tighter. We'll call in all the party from Moate, and from information I have got, we're sure to track him.'

'What confidences is Curtis making with Mademoiselle Nina?' said Atlee, who, though affecting to join the general conversation, had never ceased to watch them.

'The captain is telling me how he put down the Fenians in the rising of '61,' said Nina calmly.

'And did he? I say, Curtis, have you really suppressed rebellion in Ireland?'

'No; nor won't, Mr. Joe Atlee, till we put down the rascally press—the unprincipled penny-a-liners, that write treason to pay for their dinner.'

'Poor fellows!' replied Atlee. 'Let us hope it does not interfere with their digestion. But seriously, mademoiselle, does it not give you a great notion of our insecurity here in Ireland when you see to what we trust, law and order.

'Never mind him, Curtis,' said Kilgobbin. 'When these fellows are not saying sharp things, they have to be silent.'

While the conversation went briskly on, Nina contrived to glance unnoticed at her watch, and saw that it wanted only a quarter of an hour to nine. Nine was the hour she had named to Donogan to be in the garden, and she already trembled at the danger to which she had exposed him. She reasoned thus: so reckless and fearless is this man, that, if he should have come determined to see me, and I do not go to meet him, he is quite capable of entering the house boldly, even at the cost of being captured. The very price he would have to pay for his rashness would be its temptation.'

A sudden cast of seriousness overcame her as she thus thought, and Kate, perceiving it, rose at once to retire.

'You were not ill, dearest Nina? I saw you grow pale, and I fancied for a moment you seemed faint.'

'No; a mere passing weakness. I shall lie down and be better presently.'

'And then you'll come up to aunt's room—I call godmother aunt now—and take tea with Gorman and us all.'

'Yes, I'll do that after a little rest. I'll take half an hour or so of quiet,' said she, in broken utterances. 'I suppose the gentlemen will sit over their wine; there's no fear of their breaking-up.'

'Very little *fear*, indeed,' said Kate, laughing at the word. 'Papa made me give out some of his rare old '41 wine to-day, and they're not likely to leave it.'

'Bye-bye, then, for a little while,' said Nina dreamily, for her thoughts had gone off on another track. 'I shall join you later on.'

Kate tripped gaily up the stairs, singing pleasantly as she went, for hers was a happy heart and a hopeful.

Nina lingered for a moment with her hand on the banister, and then hurried to her room.

It was a still cold night of deep winter, a very faint crescent of a new moon was low in the sky, and a thin snowfall, slightly crisped with frost, covered the ground. Nina opened her window and looked out. All was still and quiet without—not a twig moved. She bent her ear to listen, thinking that on the frozen ground a step might perhaps be heard, and it was a relief to her anxiety when she heard nothing. The chill cold air that came

in through the window warned her to muffle herself well, and she drew the hood of her scarlet cloak over her head. Strong-booted, and with warm gloves, she stood for a moment at her door to listen, and finding all quiet, she slowly descended the stairs and gained the hall. She started affrighted as she entered, thinking there was some one seated at the table, but she rallied in an instant, as she saw it was only the loose horseman's coat or cloak of the chief constable, which, lined with red, and with the gold-laced cap beside it, made up the delusion that alarmed her.

It was not an easy task to withdraw the heavy bolts and bars that secured the massive door, and even to turn the heavy key in the lock required an effort; but she succeeded at length, and issued forth into the open.

'How I hope he has not come! how I pray he has not ventured!' said she to herself as she walked along. 'Leave-takings are sad things, and why incur one so full of peril and misery too? When I wrote to him, of course I knew nothing of his danger, and it is exactly his danger will make him come!' She knew of others to whom such reasonings would not have applied, and a scornful shake of the head showed that she would not think of them at such a moment. The sound of her own footsteps on the crisp ground made her once or twice believe she heard some one coming, and as she stopped to listen, the strong beating of her heart could be counted. It was not fear—at least not fear in the sense of a personal danger—it was that high tension which great anxiety lends to the nerves, exalting vitality to a state in which a sensation is as powerful as a material influence.

She ascended the steps of the little terraced mound of the rendezvous one by one, overwhelmed almost to fainting by some imagined analogy with the scaffold, which might be the fate of him she was going to meet.

He was standing under a tree, his arms crossed on his breast, as she came up. The moment she appeared, he rushed to meet her, and throwing himself on one knee, he seized her hand and kissed it.

'Do you know your danger in being here?' she asked, as she surrendered her hand to his grasp.

'I know it all, and this moment repays it tenfold.'

'You cannot know the full extent of the peril; you cannot know that Captain Curtis and his people are in the castle at this moment, that they are in full cry after you, and that every avenue to this spot is watched and guarded.'

'What care I! Have I not this?' And he covered her hand with kisses.

'Every moment that you are here increases your danger, and if

my absence should become known, there will be a search after me. I shall never forgive myself if my folly should lead to your being captured.'

'If I could but feel my fate was linked with yours, I'd give my life for it willingly.'

'It was not to listen to such words as these I came here.'

'Remember, dearest, they are the last confessions of one you shall never see more. They are the last cry of a heart that will soon be still for ever.'

'No, no, no!' cried she passionately. 'There is life enough left for you to win a worthy name. Listen to me calmly now: I have heard from Curtis within the last hour all his plans for your capture; I know where his patrols are stationed, and the roads they are to watch.'

'And did you care to do this?' said he tenderly.

'I would do more than that to save you.'

'Oh, do not say so!' cried he wildly, 'or you will give me such a desire to live as will make a coward of me.'

'Curtis suspects you will go northward; either he has had information, or computes it from what you have done already.'

'He is wrong, then. When I go hence, it shall be to the court-house at Tullamore, where I mean to give myself up.'

'As what?'

'As what I am—a rebel, convicted, sentenced, and escaped, and still a rebel.'

'You do not, then, care for life?'

'Do I not, for such moments of life as this!' cried he, as, with a wild rapture, he kissed her hand again and again.

'And were I to ask you, you would not try to save your life?'

'To share that life with you there is not anything I would not dare. To live and know you were another's is more than I can face. Tell me, Nina, is it true you are to be the wife of this soldier? I cannot utter his name.'

'I am to be married to Mr. Walpole.'

'What! to that contemptuous young man you have already told me so much of. How have they brought you down to this?'

'There is no thought of bringing down; his rank and place are above my own—he is by family and connection superior to us all.'

'And what is he, or how does he aspire to you? Is the vulgar security of competence to live on—is that enough for one like you? is the well-balanced good-breeding of common politeness enough to fill a heart that should be fed on passionate devotion? You may link yourself to mediocrity, but can you humble your nature to resemble it. Do you believe you can plod on the dreary

road of life without an impulse or an ambition, or blend your thoughts with those of a man who has neither?'

She stood still and did not utter a word.

'There are some—I do not know if you are one of them—who have an almost shrinking dread of poverty.'

'I am not afraid of poverty.'

'It has but one antidote, I know—intense love! The all-powerful sense of living for another begets indifference to the little straits and trials of narrow fortune, till the mind at last comes to feel how much there is to live for beyond the indulgence of vulgar enjoyments; and if, to crown all, a high ambition be present, there will be an ecstasy of bliss no words can measure.'

'Have you failed in Ireland?' asked she suddenly.

'Failed, so far as to know that a rebellion will only ratify the subjection of the country to England; a reconquest would be slavery. The chronic discontent that burns in every peasant heart will do more than the appeal to arms. It is slow, but it is certain.'

'And where is your part?'

'My part is in another land; my fortune is linked with America—that is, if I care to have a fortune.'

'Come, come, Donogan,' cried she, calling him inadvertently by his name, 'men like you do not give up the battle of life so easily. It is the very essence of their natures to resist pressure and defy defeat.'

'So I could; so I am ready to show myself. Give me but hope. There are high paths to be trodden in more than one region of the globe. There are great prizes to be wrestled for, but it must be by him who would share them with another. Tell me, Nina,' said he suddenly, lowering his voice to a tone of exquisite tenderness, 'have you never, as a little child, played at that game of what is called seeking your fortune, wandered out into some thick wood or along a winding rivulet, to meet whatever little incident imagination might dignify into adventure; and in the chance heroism of your situation have you not found an intense delight? And if so in childhood, why not see if adult years cannot renew the experience? Why not see if the great world be not as dramatic as the small one? I should say it is still more so. I know you have courage.'

'And what will courage do for me?' asked she, after a pause.

'For you, not much; for me, everything.'

'I do not understand you.'

'I mean this—that if that stout heart could dare the venture and trust its fate to me—to me, poor, outlawed, and doomed—

there would be a grander heroism in a girl's nature than ever found home in a man's.'

'And what should I be?'

'My wife within an hour; my idol while I live.'

'There are some who would give this another name than courage,' said she thoughtfully.

'Let them call it what they will, Nina. Is it not to the unbounded trust of a nature that is above all others that I, poor, unknown, ignoble as I am, appeal when I ask, Will you be mine? One word—only one—or, better still——'

He clasped her in his arms as he spoke, and drawing her head towards his, kissed her cheek rapturously.

With wild and fervent words, he now told her rapidly that he had come prepared to make her the declaration, and had provided everything, in the event of her compliance, for their flight. By an unused path through the bog they could gain the main road to Maryborough, where a priest, well known in the Fenian interest, would join them in marriage. The officials of the railroad were largely imbued with the Nationalist sentiment, and Donogan could be sure of safe crossing to Kilkenny, where the members of the party were in great force.

In a very few words he told her how, by the mere utterance of his name, he could secure the faithful services and the devotion of the people in every town or village of the kingdom. 'The English have done this for us,' cried he, 'and we thank them for it. They have popularised rebellion in a way that all our attempts could never have accomplished. How could I for instance gain access to those little gatherings at fair or market, in the yard before the chapel, or the square before the court-house—how could I be able to explain to those groups of country-people what we mean by a rising in Ireland? what we purpose by a revolt against England? how it is to be carried on, or for whose benefit? what the prizes of success, what the cost of failure? Yet the English have contrived to embody all these in one word. and that word *my* name!'

There was a certain artifice, there is no doubt, in the way in which this poorly-clad and not distinguished-looking man contrived to surround himself with attributes of power and influence; and his self-reliance imparted to his voice as he spoke a tone of confidence that was actually dignified. And besides this, there was personal daring—for his life was on the hazard, and it was the very contingency of which he seemed to take the least heed.

Not less adroit, too, was the way in which he showed what a

shock and amazement her conduct would occasion in that world of her acquaintances—that world which had hitherto regarded her as essentially a pleasure-seeker, self-indulgent and capricious. '"Which of us all," will they say, "could have done what that girl has done? Which of us having the world at her feet, her destiny at her very bidding, would go off and brave the storms of life out of the heroism of her own nature? How we all misread her nature! how wrongfully and unfairly we judged her! In what utter ignorance of her real character was every interpretation we made! How scornfully has she, by one act, replied to all our misconstruction of her! What a sarcasm on all our worldliness is her devotion!"'

He was eloquent, after a fashion, and he had, above most men, the charm of a voice of singular sweetness and melody. It was clear as a bell, and he could modulate its tones till, like the drip, drip of water on a rock, they fell one by one upon the ear. Masses had often been moved by the power of his words, and the mesmeric influence of persuasiveness was a gift to do him good service now.

There was much in the man that she liked. She liked his rugged boldness and determination; she liked his contempt for danger and his self-reliance; and, essentially, she liked how totally different he was to all other men. He had not their objects, their hopes, their fears, and their ways. To share the destiny of such a man was to ensure a life that could not pass unrecorded. There might be storm, and even shipwreck, but there was notoriety—perhaps even fame!

And how mean and vulgar did all the others she had known seem by comparison with him—how contemptible the polished insipidity of Walpole, how artificial the neatly-turned epigrams of Atlee. How would either of these have behaved in such a moment of danger as this man's? Every minute he passed there was another peril to his life, and yet he had no thought for himself—his whole anxiety was to gain time to appeal to her. He told her she was more to him than his ambition—she saw herself she was more to him than life. The whirlwind rapidity of his eloquence also moved her, and the varied arguments he addressed —now to her heroism, now to her self-sacrifice, now to the power of her beauty, now to the contempt she felt for the inglorious lives of commonplace people—the ignoble herd who passed unnoticed. All these swayed her; and after a long interval, in which she heard him without a word, she said, in a low murmer to herself, 'I will do it.'

Donogan clasped her to his heart as she said it, and held her

some seconds in a fast embrace. 'At last I know what it is to love,' cried he, with rapture.

'Look there!' cried she, suddenly disengaging herself from his arm. 'They are in the drawing-room already. I can see them as they pass the windows. I must go back, if it be for a moment as I should be missed.'

'Can I let you leave me now?' he said, and the tears were in his eyes as he spoke.

'I have given you my word, and you may trust me,' said she, as she held out her hand.

'I was forgetting this document: this is the lease or the agreement I told you of.' She took it, and hurried away.

In less than five minutes afterwards she was among the company in the drawing-room.

'Here have I been singing a rebel ballad, Nina,' said Kate, 'and not knowing the while it was Mr. Atlee who wrote it.'

'What, Mr. Atlee,' cried Nina, 'is the "Time to begin" yours?' And then, without waiting for an answer, she seated herself at the piano, and striking the chords of the accompaniment with a wild and vigorous hand, she sang—

> 'If the moment is come and the hour to need us,
> If we stand man to man, like kindred and kin;
> If we know we have one who is ready to lead us,
> What want we for more than the word to begin?'

The wild ring of defiance in which her clear, full voice gave out these words, seemed to electrify all present, and to a second or two of perfect silence a burst of applause followed, that even Curtis, with all his loyalty, could not refrain from joining.

'Thank God, you're not a man, Miss Nina!' cried he fervently.

'I'm not sure she's not more dangerous as she is,' said Lord Kilgobbin. 'There's people out there in the bog, starving and half-naked, would face the Queen's Guards if they only heard her voice to cheer them on. Take my word for it, rebellion would have died out long ago in Ireland if there wasn't the woman's heart to warm it.'

'If it were not too great a liberty, Mademoiselle Kostalergi, said Joe, 'I should tell you that you have not caught the true expression of my song. The brilliant bravura in which you gave the last line, immensely exciting as it was, is not correct. The whole force consists in the concentrated power of a fixed resolve—the passage should be subdued.'

An insolent toss of the head was all Nina's reply, and there was a stillness in the room, as, exchanging looks with each other, the

'I declare you have left a tear upon my cheek,' said Kate.

different persons there expressed their amazement at Atlee's daring.

'Who 's for a rubber of whist?' said Lord Kilgobbin, to relieve the awkward pause. 'Are you, Curtis? Atlee, I know, is ready.'

'Here is all prepared,' said Dick. 'Captain Curtis told me before dinner that he would not like to go to bed till he had his sergeant's report, and so I have ordered a broiled bone to be ready at one o'clock, and we 'll sit up as late as he likes after.'

'Make the stake pounds and fives,' cried Joe, 'and I should pronounce your arrangements perfection.'

'With this amendment,' interposed my lord, 'that nobody is expected to pay!'

'I say, Joe,' whispered Dick, as they drew nigh the table, 'my cousin is angry with you; why have you not asked her to sing?'

'Because she expects it; because she 's tossing over the music yonder to provoke it; because she 's in a furious rage with me: that will be nine points of the game in my favour,' hissed he out between his teeth.

'You are utterly wrong—you mistake her altogether.'

'Mistake a woman! Dick, will you tell me what I *do* know, if I do not read every turn and trick of their tortuous nature? They are occasionally hard to decipher when they 're displeased. It 's very big print indeed when they 're angry.'

'You 're off, are you?' asked Nina, as Kate was about to leave.

'Yes; I 'm going to read to him.'

'To read to him!' said Nina, laughing. 'How nice it sounds, when one sums up all existence in a pronoun. Good-night, dearest—good-night,' and she kissed her twice. And then, as Kate reached the door, she ran towards her, and said, 'Kiss me again, my dearest Kate!'

'I declare you have left a tear upon my cheek,' said Kate.

'It was about all I could give you as a wedding-present,' muttered Nina, as she turned away.

'Are you come to study whist, Nina?' said Lord Kilgobbin, as she drew nigh the table.

'No, my lord; I have no talent for games, but I like to look at the players.'

Joe touched Dick with his foot, and shot a cunning glance towards him, as though to say, 'Was I not correct in all I said?'

'Couldn't you sing us something, my dear? we 're not such infatuated gamblers that we 'll not like to hear you—eh, Atlee?'

'Well, my lord, I don't know, I 'm not sure—that is, I don't see how a memory for trumps is to be maintained through the fascinating charm of mademoiselle's voice. And as for cards, it 's

enough for Miss Kostalergi to be in the room to make one forget not only the cards, but the Fenians.'

'If it was only out of loyalty, then, I should leave you!' said she, and walked proudly away.

CHAPTER LXXXIV

NEXT MORNING

The whist-party did not break up till nigh morning. The sergeant had once appeared at the drawing-room to announce that all was quiet without. There had been no sign of any rising of the people, nor any disposition to molest the police. Indeed, so peaceful did everything look, and such an air of easy indifference pervaded the country, the police were half disposed to believe that the report of Donogan being in the neighbourhood was unfounded, and not impossibly circulated to draw off attention from some other part of the country.

This was also Lord Kilgobbin's belief. 'The man has no friends, or even warm followers, down here. It was the merest accident first led him to this part of the country, where, besides, we are all too poor to be rebels. It's only down in Meath, where the people are well off, and rents are not too high, that people can afford to be Fenians.'

While he was enunciating this fact to Curtis, they were walking up and down the breakfast-room, waiting for the appearance of the ladies to make tea.

'I declare it's nigh eleven o'clock,' said Curtis, 'and I meant to have been over two baronies before this hour.'

'Don't distress yourself, captain. The man was never within fifty miles of where we are. And why would he? It is not the Bog of Allen is the place for a revolution.'

'It's always the way with the people at the Castle,' grumbled out Curtis. 'They know more of what's going on down the country than we that live here! It's one despatch after another. Head-centre Such-a-one is at the "Three Cripples." He slept there two nights; he swore in fifteen men last Saturday, and they'll tell you where he bought a pair of corduroy breeches, and what he ate for his breakfast——'

'I wish we had ours,' broke in Kilgobbin. 'Where's Kate all this time?'

'Papa, papa, I want you for a moment; come here to me quickly,' cried Kate, whose head appeared for a moment at the

door. 'Here's very terrible tidings, papa dearest,' said she, as she drew him along towards his study. 'Nina is gone! Nina has run away!'

'Run away for what?'

'Run away to be married; and she is married. Read this, or I'll read it for you. A country boy has just brought it from Maryborough.'

Like a man stunned almost to insensibility, Kearney crossed his hands before him, and sat gazing out vacantly before him.

'Can you listen to me? can you attend to me, dear papa?'

'Go on,' said he, in a faint voice.

'It is written in a great hurry, and very hard to read. It runs thus: "Dearest,—I have no time for explainings nor excuses, if I were disposed to make either, and I will confine myself to a few facts. I was married this morning to Donogan—the rebel: I know you have added the word, and I write it to show how our sentiments are united. As people are prone to put into the lottery the number they have dreamed of, I have taken my ticket in this greatest of all lotteries on the same wise grounds. I have been dreaming adventures ever since I was a little child, and it is but natural that I marry an adventurer."'

A deep groan from the old man made her stop; but as she saw that he was not changed in colour or feature, she went on—

'"He says he loves me very dearly, and that he will treat me well. I like to believe both, and I do believe them. He says we shall be very poor for the present, but that he means to become some thing or somebody later on. I do not much care for the poverty, if there is hope; and he is a man to hope with and to hope from.

'"You are, in a measure, the cause of all, since it was to tell me he would send away all the witnesses against your husband, that is to be, that I agreed to meet him, and to give me the lease which Miss O'Shea was so rash as to place in Gill's hands. This I now send you."'

'And this she has sent you, Kate?' asked Kilgobbin.

'Yes, papa, it is here, and the master of the *Swallow's* receipt for Gill as a passenger to Quebec.'

'Read on.'

'There is little more, papa, except what I am to say to you—to forgive her.'

'I can't forgive her. It was deceit—cruel deceit.'

'It was not, papa. I could swear there was no forethought. If there had been, she would have told me. She told me everything. She never loved Walpole; she could not love him. She

was marrying him with a broken heart. It was not that she loved another, but she knew she could have loved another.'

'Don't talk such muddle to *me*,' said he angrily. 'You fancy life is to be all courting, but it isn't. It 's house-rent, and butchers' bills, and apothecaries', and the pipe water—it 's shoes, and schooling, and arrears of rent, and rheumatism, and flannel waistcoats, and toothache have a considerable space in Paradise!' And there was a grim comicality in his utterance of the word.

'She said no more than the truth of herself,' broke in Kate. 'With all her queenly ways, she could face poverty bravely—I know it.'

'So you can—any of you, if a man 's making love to you. You care little enough what you eat, and not much more what you wear, if he tells you it becomes you; but that 's not the poverty that grinds and crushes. It 's what comes home in sickness; it 's what meets you in insolent letters, in threats of this or menaces of that. But what do you know about it, or why do I speak of it? She 's married a man that could be hanged if the law caught him, and for no other reason, that I see, than because he 's a felon.'

'I don't think you are fair to her, papa.'

'Of course I 'm not. Is it likely that at sixty I can be as great a fool as I was at sixteen?'

'So that means that you once thought in the same way that she does?'

'I didn't say any such thing, miss,' said he angrily. 'Did you tell Miss Betty what 's happened us?'

'I just broke it to her, papa, and she made me run away and read the note to you. Perhaps you 'll come and speak to her?'

'I will,' said he, rising and preparing to leave the room. 'I 'd rather hear I was a bankrupt this morning than that news!' And he mounted the stairs, sighing heavily as he went.

'Isn't this fine news the morning has brought us, Miss Betty!' cried he, as he entered the room with a haggard look, and hands clasped before him. 'Did you ever dream there was such disgrace in store for us?'

'This marriage, you mean,' said the old lady dryly.

'Of course I do—if you call it a marriage at all.'

'I do call it a marriage—here 's Father Tierney's certificate, a copy made in his own handwriting: "Daniel Donogan, M.P., of Killamoyle and Innismul, County Kilkenny, to Virginia Kostalergi, of no place in particular, daughter of Prince Kostalergi, of the same localities, contracted in holy matrimony this morning at six o'clock, and witnessed likewise by Morris M'Cabe, vestry

clerk—Mary Kestinogue, her mark." Do you want more than that?'

'Do I want more? Do I want a respectable wedding? Do I want a decent man—a gentleman—a man fit to maintain her? Is this the way she ought to have behaved? Is this what we thought of her?'

'It is not, Mat Kearney—you say truth. I never believed so well of her till now. I never believed before that she had anything in her head but to catch one of those English puppies, with their soft voices and their sneers about Ireland. I never saw her that she wasn't trying to flatter them, and to please them, and to sing them down, as she called it herself—the very name fit for it! And that she had the high heart to take a man not only poor, but with a rope round his neck, shows me how I wronged her. I could give her five thousand this morning to make her a dowry, and to prove how I honour her.'

'Can any one tell who he is? What do we know of him?'

'All Ireland knows of him; and, after all, Mat Kearney, she has only done what her mother did before her.'

'Poor Matty!' said Kearney, as he drew his hand across his eyes.

'Ay, ay! Poor Matty, if you like; but Matty was a beauty run to seed, and, like the rest of them, she married the first good-looking vagabond she saw. Now, this girl was in the very height and bloom of her beauty, and she took a fellow for other qualities than his whiskers or his legs. They tell me he isn't even well-looking—so that I have hopes of her.'

'Well, well,' said Kearney, 'he has done you a good turn, anyhow—he has got Peter Gill out of the country.'

'And it's the one thing that I can't forgive him, Mat, just the one thing that's fretting me now. I was living in hopes to see that scoundrel Peter on the table, and Counsellor Holmes baiting him in a cross-examination. I wanted to see how the lawyer wouldn't leave him a rag of character or a strip of truth to cover himself with. How he'd tear off his evasions, and confront him with his own lies, till he wouldn't know what he was saying or where he was sitting! I wanted to hear the description he would give of him to the jury; and I'd go home to my dinner after that, and not wait for the verdict.'

'All the same, I'm glad we're rid of Peter.'

'Of course you are. You're a man, and well pleased when your enemy runs away; but if you were a women, Mat Kearney, you'd rather he'd stand out boldly and meet you, and fight his battle to the end. But they haven't done with me yet. I'll put

that little blackguard attorney,' that said my letter was a lease, into Chancery; and it will go hard with me if I don't have him struck off the rolls. There 's a small legacy of five hundred pounds left me the other day, and, with the blessing of Providence, the Common Pleas shall have it. Don't shake your head, Mat Kearney. I 'm not robbing any one. Your daughter will have enough and to spare——'

'Oh, godmother,' cried Kate imploringly.

'It wasn't I, my darling, that said the five hundred would be better spent on wedding-clothes or house-linen. That delicate and refined suggestion was your father's. It was his lordship made the remark.'

It was a fortunate accident at that conjuncture that a servant should announce the arrival of Mr. Flood, the Tory J.P., who, hearing of Donogan's escape, had driven over to confer with his brother magistrate. Lord Kilgobbin was not sorry to quit the field, where he 'd certainly earned few laurels, and hastened down to meet his colleague.

CHAPTER LXXXV

THE END

While the two justices and Curtis discussed the unhappy condition of Ireland, and deplored the fact that the law-breaker never appealed in vain to the sympathies of a people whose instincts were adverse to discipline, Flood's estimate of Donogan went very far to reconcile Kilgobbin to Nina's marriage.

'Out of Ireland you 'll see that man has stuff in him to rise to eminence and station. All the qualities of which home manufacture would only make a rebel will combine to form a man of infinite resource and energy in America. Have you never imagined, Mr. Kearney, that if a man were to employ the muscular energy to make his way through a drawing-room that he would use to force his passage through a mob, the effort would be misplaced, and the man himself a nuisance? Our old institutions, with all their faults, have certain ordinary characteristics that answer to good-breeding and good manners—reverence for authority, respect for the gradations of rank, dislike to civil convulsion, and such like. We do not sit tamely by when all these are threatened with overthrow; but there are countries where there are fewer of these traditions, and men like Donogan find their place there.'

While they debated such points as these within-doors, Dick Kearney and Atlee sat on the steps of the hall door and smoked their cigars.

'I must say, Joe,' said Dick, 'that your accustomed acuteness cuts but a very poor figure in the present case. It was no later than last night you told me that Nina was madly in love with you. Do you remember, as we went upstairs to bed, what you said on the landing? "That girl is my own. I may marry her to-morrow, or this day three months."'

'And I was right.'

'So right were you that she is at this moment the wife of another.'

'And cannot you see why?'

'I suppose I can: she preferred him to you, and I scarcely blame her.'

'No such thing; there was no thought of preference in the matter. If you were not one of those fellows who mistake an illustration, and see everything in a figure but the parallel, I should say that I had trained too finely. Now had she been thoroughbred, I was all right; as a cocktail, I was all wrong.'

'I own I cannot follow you.'

'Well, the woman was angry, and she married that fellow out of pique.'

'Out of pique?'

'I repeat it. It was a pure case of temper. I would not ask her to sing. I even found fault with the way she gave the rebel ballad. I told her there was an old lady—Americanly speaking—at the corner of College Green, who enunciated the words better, and then I sat down to whist, and would not even vouchsafe a glance in return for those looks of alternate rage or languishment she threw across the table. She was frantic. I saw it. There was nothing she wouldn't have done. I vow she'd have married even *you* at that moment. And with all that, she'd not have done it if she'd been "clean-bred." Come, come, don't flare up, and look as if you'd strike me. On the mother's side she was a Kearney, and all the blood of loyalty in her veins; but there must have been something wrong with the Prince of Delos. Dido was very angry, but her breeding saved her; *she* didn't take a head-centre because she quarrelled with Æneas.'

'You are, without exception, the most conceited——'

'No, not ass—don't say ass, for I'm nothing of the kind. Conceited, if you like, or rather if your natural politeness insists on saying it, and cannot distinguish between the vanity of a puppy and the self-consciousness of real power; but come, tell me of

something pleasanter than all this personal discussion—how did mademoiselle convey her tidings? have you seen her note? was it "transport"? was it high-pitched, or apologetic?'

'Kate read it to me, and I thought it reasonable enough. She had done a daring thing, and she knew it; she hoped the best, and in any case she was not faint-hearted.'

'Any mention of me?'

'Not a word—your name does not occur.'

'I thought not; she had not pluck for that. Poor girl, the blow is heavier than I meant it.'

'She speaks of Walpole; she incloses a few lines to him, and tells my sister where she will find a small packet of trinkets and such like he had given her.'

'Natural enough all that. There was no earthly reason why she shouldn't be able to talk of Walpole as easily as of Colenso or the cattle plague; but you see she could not trust herself to approach *my* name.'

'You'll provoke me to kick you, Atlee.'

'In that case I shall sit where I am. But I was going to remark that as I shall start for town by the next train, and intend to meet Walpole, if your sister desires it, I shall have much pleasure in taking charge of that note to his address.'

'All right, I'll tell her. I see that she and Miss Betty are about to drive over to O'Shea's Barn, and I'll give your message at once.'

While Dick hastened away on his errand, Joe Atlee sat alone, musing and thoughtful. I have no reason to presume my reader cares for his reflections, nor to know the meaning of a strange smile, half scornful and half sad, that played upon his face. At last he rose slowly, and stood looking up at the grim old castle, and its quaint blending of ancient strength and modern deformity. 'Life here, I take it, will go on pretty much as before. All the acts of this drama will resemble each other, but my own little melodrama must open soon. I wonder what sort of house there will be for Joe Atlee's benefit.'

Atlee was right. Kilgobbin Castle fell back to the ways in which our first chapter found it, and other interests—especially those of Kate's approaching marriage—soon effaced the memory of Nina's flight and runaway match. By that happy law by which the waves of events follow and obliterate each other, the present glided back into the past, and the past faded till its colours grew uncertain.

On the second evening after Nina's departure, Atlee stood on the pier of Kingstown as the packet drew up at the jetty.

Walpole saw him, and waved his hand in friendly greeting. 'What news from Kilgobbin?' cried he, as he landed.

'Nothing very rose-coloured,' said Atlee, as he handed the note.

'Is this true?' said Walpole, as a slight tremor shook his voice.

'All true.'

'Isn't it Irish?—Irish the whole of it.'

'So they said down there, and, stranger than all, they seemed rather proud of it.'

THE END

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